

IRAQI VOLUNTEERS, IRAQI REFUGEES: WHAT IS AMERICA'S OBLIGATION?

HEARING BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

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IRAQI VOLUNTEERS, IRAQI REFUGEES: WHAT IS AMERICA'S OBLIGATION?

MONDAY, MARCH 26, 2007

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST
AND SOUTH ASIA,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 3:38 p.m. in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Gary L. Ackerman (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Subcommittee will come to order. Good morning. With the collapse of South Vietnam becoming imminent on the night of April 10, 1975, President Gerald Ford addressed a joint session of Congress. Congress having had already repudiated the Vietnam War, the President urged the consideration of the safety of—and I quote the President:

“Tens of thousands of South Vietnamese employees of the United States Government of news agencies, of contractors and businesses for many years whose lives with their dependents are in grave peril. There are tens of thousands of other South Vietnamese intellectuals, professors, teachers, editors and opinion leaders who have supported the South Vietnamese cause and the alliance with the United States to whom we have a profound obligation.”

Asking Congress to provide emergency supplemental appropriations, President Ford stated clearly America's duty. He said:

“Fundamental decency requires that we do everything in our power to ease the misery and the pain of the monumental human crisis which has befallen the people of Vietnam. Millions have fled in the face of communist onslaught and are now homeless and are now destitute. I hereby pledge in the name of the American people that the United States will make a maximum humanitarian effort to help care for and feed these hopeless victims.”

President Ford was a man of deep integrity and quiet compassion. At his urging, only 1 month later Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act. President Ford also knew how to make things happen. Between April 3 and December 20 of 1975, Operation New Life and Operation Baby Lift brought over 131,000 Vietnamese refugees out of the chaos in Vietnam to

the security of the United States. President Ford made the moral argument and the bureaucracy bent to his will.

By comparison, the current administration's record in keeping faith with the Iraqis who have been helping us, the translators, the facilitators, the guides, the intelligence sources, is a bit different. Since April 2003, the Bush administration has managed to admit exactly 692 refugees. Are these paltry figures a reflection of an insignificant Iraqi refugee problem? Not exactly.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that 2 million Iraqis have fled to neighboring countries, and that 1.9 million Iraqis are internally displaced, and that that number is growing by 50,000 every months. Among these millions are thousands of Iraqis who have assisted us and in doing so marked themselves as targets in Iraq's civil war. These people are now in flight because of our failure.

After this growing crisis was highlighted in January by our colleagues in the Senate, the State Department a month later in February suddenly discovered an additional \$18 million for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. Likewise, the administration recognized that an additional \$60 million for Iraqi refugees was needed in fiscal year 2007 supplemental appropriations. I would note that when the House passed the supplemental bill 3 days ago, last Friday, we bumped the 60 up to \$90 million for Iraqi refugees.

But most miraculous of all in mid February State suddenly realized that it had heretofore untapped capacity to handle an additional 7,000 refugee referrals from the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. But true to form, State Department simultaneously acknowledged that perhaps only half that number might be ready to travel by the end of September of this year.

In 1975, with the nation divided by an unpopular, unnecessary and unsuccessful war, President Ford was able to move over 131,000 Vietnamese in 8 months. In 2007, with the nation divided by an unpopular, unnecessary and unsuccessful war, President Bush's administration admitted in February that it probably will not be able to move more than 2,000 or 3,000 Iraqis by the end of September, the same period of 8 months, and somehow President Ford got the reputation as a bumbler.

The fact is we have left thousands of Iraqis high and dry, desperate and deserted, people who believe in us and the vision we proffered, people who volunteered to help us. These people have now lost everything, their homes, their safety, their jobs, their savings, their property, their tomorrows, their hope of survival, all of it. Along with millions of other refugees, thousands of these brave men and women as well as their families carrying the collaborators taint have been left to fend for themselves within the bloody chaos of Iraq or have been abandoned and left to rot in the margins of generally impoverished neighborhoods in neighboring countries.

As it stands, this refugee crisis will mark our national honor with an indelible stain. Whether you support the President's plan or believe we need to bring our troops home, America has a clear moral obligation to the millions of Iraqis who have become refugees because of our invasion, however well intentioned, but even more so and especially to the thousands of Iraqis who because of their allegiance to us have no future in their own country. The people

who put their lives and lives of their families on the line by assisting the United States Government, our armed forces and our coalition partners, must not be abandoned in their hour of need.

In April 1975, President Ford concluded his remarks to Congress with these words: “The spirit of America is good, and the heart of America is strong. Let us be proud of what we have done and confident in what we can do, and may God ever guide us to do what is right.” We should thank President Ford for his generous description of ourselves by making ourselves worthy of his words.

Accordingly, I am announcing today my intention to introduce legislation to require the President to develop and present to Congress a policy and legislative proposals to improve our assistance for all Iraqi refugees and to bring safety in the United States to those Iraqis and their families who face persecution and physical jeopardy as a consequence of having worked for us, trusted us, believed in us. I would urge members of the subcommittee, regardless of party, to consider cosponsoring this legislation to show that while we boast as Americans that we have many minds, we pride ourselves in knowing we have one heart.

I now would like to ask my partner and the ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. Pence, to make whatever remarks he would care to.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Ackerman follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE GARY L. ACKERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

With the collapse of South Vietnam becoming imminent, on the night of April, 10, 1975, President Gerald Ford addressed a Joint Session of Congress.

He appealed to the Congress—which had already repudiated the Vietnam War—to consider the safety of “tens of thousands of South Vietnamese employees of the United States Government, of news agencies, of contractors and businesses for many years, whose lives, with their dependents, are in very grave peril. There are tens of thousands of other South Vietnamese intellectuals, professors, teachers, editors, and opinion leaders who have supported the South Vietnamese cause and the alliance with the United States to whom we have a profound moral obligation.”

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President Ford, was a man of deep integrity and quiet compassion. At his urging, only one month later, Congress passed the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act. President Ford also knew how to make things happen: Between April 3rd and December 20th of 1975, Operation New Life and Operation Baby Lift brought over 131,000 Vietnamese refugees out of the chaos in Vietnam, to the security of the United States. President Ford made the moral argument, and the bureaucracy bent to his will.

By comparison, the current administration’s record in keeping faith with the Iraqis who have been helping us—the translators, the facilitators, the guides and intelligence sources—is a bit different. Since April 2003, the Bush Administration has managed to admit exactly 692 Iraqi refugees.

This number was 466 in January, and of that number, 202 had come in 2006.

Are these paltry figures a reflection of an insignificant Iraqi refugee problem? Not exactly. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports that 2 million Iraqis have fled to neighboring countries, and that 1.9 million Iraqis are internally displaced, and that this number is growing by 50,000 every month. Among these millions are thousands of Iraqis who have assisted us, and in doing so, marked

themselves as targets in Iraq's civil war. These people are now in flight because our failure.

After this growing crisis was highlighted in January by our colleagues in the Senate, the State Department, in February, suddenly discovered an additional \$18 million for the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees. Likewise, the Administration recognized that an additional \$60 million for Iraqi refugees was needed in the FY-07 Supplemental Appropriations bill. I would note, that when the House passed the Supplemental last Friday, an additional \$90 million for Iraqi refugees was provided. But most miraculous of all, in mid-February, State suddenly realized it had a heretofore untapped capacity to handle an additional 7,000 refugee referrals from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. But, true to form, State simultaneously acknowledged that perhaps only half that number might be ready to travel by the end of September of this year.

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The fact is, we have left thousands of Iraqis high, dry, desperate and deserted; people who believed in us and the vision we proffered; people who volunteered to help us. These people have now lost everything—their homes, their families, their safety, their futures, their jobs, their savings, their property, their hope of survival—all of it. Along with millions of other refugees, thousands of these brave men and women, as well as their families, carrying the collaborator's taint, have been left to fend for themselves within the bloody chaos of Iraq, or have been abandoned, and left to rot in the margins of generally impoverished neighboring countries.

As it stands, this refugee crisis will mark our national honor with an indelible stain.

Whether you support the President's plan, or believe we need to bring our troops home, America has a clear moral obligation to both the millions of Iraqis who have become refugees because of our invasion—however well intentioned—but even more so and especially, to the thousands of Iraqis who because of their allegiance to us, have no future in their own country. The people who put their lives, and those of their families, on the line by assisting the United States government, our armed forces, and our Coalition partners must not be abandoned in their hour of need.

In April 1975, President Ford concluded his remarks to Congress with these words: "The spirit of America is good and the heart of America is strong. Let us be proud of what we have done and confident of what we can do.

And may God ever guide us to do what is right."

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I urge members of the subcommittee regardless of party, to consider co-sponsoring this legislation to show that while we boast as Americans that we have many minds, we pride ourselves in knowing we have one heart.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for calling this important hearing, and I would like to welcome our distinguished panel this Monday afternoon. Mr. Chairman, as you just said in your opening statement regardless of one's position on the war in Iraq, whether the initial debate over the authorization of force in 2002 or the surge that began less than 6 weeks ago, one cannot help but be moved by the plight of millions of Iraqi refugees, internally displaced persons and the awful prospect of ethnic cleansing, both real and potential that grips today's circumstance.

And many of the best and brightest are leaving. Page one of yesterday's *Los Angeles Times* had an article entitled, "A Searing Assault on Iraq's Intellectual." The author stated, "The middle class is fleeing the violence and threats leaving the question who will

lead?" Mr. Chairman, a more vexing question is the subject of how the United States treats those who risked their lives in support of our troops and diplomats on the ground in Iraq.

I am pleased that this subcommittee is taking this critically important subject up today. I believe that two classes of people are represented in today's hearing. First is a relatively small group of translators, affectionately called by their American handlers "Terps," and this season it would be important to note that we are not talking about the Maryland basketball team.

These Terps, people like our witness Sarah, were vetted, and then employed by U.S. Government entities. It would be worth noting that this subcommittee is not an adjudicatory body with the power to rule on the merits of her particular case. As our witness, the author George Packer notes employment with the U.S. can tragically be a death sentence. Protecting and assisting those who have helped the United States and coalition forces is a moral obligation of the American people.

Then there is the larger refugee problem, one numbering perhaps millions of candidates for political asylum, more than 10 percent of the population according to CRS. People who face living conditions too dangerous to return to, they are now millions living in Syria, Jordan and elsewhere. How we should address their sad plight is also the focus of this hearing.

And, Mr. Chairman, a special word about my Christian brethren in Iraq. Some might be surprised to know that some of the oldest Christian churches and communities in the world exist in Iraq. Most Iraqi Christians are Chaldeans, eastern right Catholics. Chaldeans are an ancient people, many who still speak Aramaic which was actually the native language of Jesus of Nazareth.

Christians of all kinds comprise about 5 percent of Iraq's population but make up nearly 40 percent of the refugees fleeing Iraq according to the United Nations' High Commissioner for Refugees. Ten of Baghdad's 80 Christian churches have closed, and more than half of Baghdad's Christian population, by some estimates, has fled. This is a tragic result for a historic community.

Mr. Chairman, I believe the larger problem of millions of the refugees and IDPs speaks to the importance of our efforts there. If there is to be a peaceful and stable Iraq, one that all sects and creeds can peaceably coexist in, living under the hard fought and won freedoms of their new constitution, then Baghdad must be secured by that same law and order. The best hope for Baghdad becoming secure I believe is through the surge that is currently under way.

We have an obligation to equip our Armed Forces with the tool they need for success which would then make an Iraq that most refugees would happily come home to. Mr. Chairman, the question of striking the right balance between legitimate security vetting that must properly screen those seeking refugee status and the humanitarian and moral obligation we have to help those who have helped us is the center of this hearing and should be the center of our national deliberation.

On its face the sheer number of those granted asylum seems pathetically meager yet I understand that no one wants to be the official who allowed into this country those who would purpose to de-

stroy this country. I hope the Secretary will help us sort through these issues, and I am confident she will. Mr. Chairman, thank you again for calling this hearing, and I look very much forward to the discussion and question and answers that will follow.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much for that strong statement, and I want to offer my personal thanks to you for changing your entire schedule around so that we could conduct this hearing on this time on this day in an expeditious fashion. Mr. Berman.

Mr. BERMAN. I do not have an opening statement, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Chabot.

Mr. CHABOT. In the interest of getting to the witnesses, I will withhold any statement.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. In the interest of getting to the witnesses, I will just make one brief statement. This is a humanitarian crisis of soaring magnitude. Whatever the intentions were in going into Iraq we know what the consequences are. This is a broken country. The American Government has a major, major stake of responsibility in this being a broken country, and nowhere is it more manifested than with the plight of the refugees, nearly 3 million, but the greater danger is to me is the impact that these refugees are having in a further destabilization of the entire region, and that is what worries me so.

The impact these refugees are having into the bordering states of Syria, into Lebanon, into Jordan and into these other areas, and then what are we doing in America to fulfill our end of the obligation? The restrictions and the limited number of Iraqi refugees that enter into our country certainly needs to be reexamined, and this is a very serious issue, Mr. Chairman. I also want you to know that I am delighted to cosponsor your very forthright and very, very meaningful piece of legislation. I yield back.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, and thank you. Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I think this is a very important hearing this afternoon. Some of us—I suspect most of us here on the panel that have been to Iraq and been in the Middle East—have some very definite ideas as to the challenges we are facing there and where we are today and where we are going. I was fortunate to go last May with Congressman Pence, the first congressional delegation at that time to meet with Prime Minister Maliki and his government, and like I think all Americans hope for the best. I must tell you I have been disappointed.

But I want to bring this a bit locally, Madam Secretary, because it deals specifically with the subject matter this afternoon and read for you a letter that I received last week from a constituent of mine in Bakersfield who is married to a family member in Los Angeles, and let me just read excerpts from the letter to get your reaction, and I would like you to follow up because it deals again with the subject matter this afternoon, and I will submit the documents.

Obviously I will not mention the names for reasons to protect the security of the families involved. It goes by:

“I am writing to you this letter through my cousin. A way of introduction, I am an Iraqi born American citizen who immigrated to the United States in 1981, realizing the American dream. I worked hard to achieve my goals. I pay my taxes, ful-

fill my civic duty by voting and taking my turn in jury duties. When called to liberate Iraq was made I supported it all the way. Although we are all strong citizens in our family, it was my hope that we could help the Iraqi people without the bloodshed. I have a large family in Iraq. My dream has always been to have them experience the kind of life I enjoy in the United States. Unfortunately fate did not dictate this providence, and my family has been caught up in the midst of this civil war among the factions.

"I am in constant telephone contact with my eldest sister in Baghdad. In the past several months my family has experienced several life threatening challenges. My brother was approached and a demand was made for money. When he refused to submit this demand his place of business was burned to the ground. Then my nephew was shot in the stomach while walking down the street. Another nephew was kidnapped while coming home from school. The kidnappers contacted my sister and demanded \$7,000 ransom money for his return.

"Our family came together to raise the necessary money. The \$7,000 ransom was paid on December 2006. My nephew was not returned as promised. In January 2007, a second demand for the money was made. My sister was unable to provide this additional ransom money. A few days later my sister and niece were approached in their home and shot several times in the head and the chest. Their injuries are so severe that you could not recognize them. My niece's 3-year-old daughter witnessed this double murder and was left with her dead mother and grandmother. My nephew is still missing as of this date.

"My family lives in fear of not knowing whether they will make it through another day. They cannot send their children to school for fear they could be shot, kidnapped or raped. They are afraid to leave their homes and to pay to have groceries delivered, et cetera. I have a large family still in Iraq. A few of the family members are in their final year of college, and they have worked hard to get by where they are with their education. But they know that if they do not leave they may not live to put their college degrees to good use.

"There are 11 family members whose lives are in dire jeopardy. I stay in close contact via telephone with them. I am trying to get them out of the country. I have been told that the only way my family can get out of Iraq is through purchasing visas on the black market for \$10,000 a person. This would not be an option for us. I want to bring them here legally. I am desperate for their safety, and do not know what to do. I am turning to you for your direction. I need your help now to turn my family's continuous nightmare into a dream of hope.

"On the following page you will find a list of my 11 family members whose lives are at risk. I write this letter with a heavy heart and with sadness as I sit and watch my family getting murdered. It leaves me this feeling of helplessness. I look forward to hearing from you on this urgent matter and may God continue to bless this land of the free."

When we were in Jordan prior to our journey into Iraq, the foreign minister told Congressman Pence and myself and Prince Has-

san that Jordan has experienced over 700,000 Iraqis that have immigrated in the last 3½, 4 years. The number may be larger. It just seems to me that a lot of the intelligence, a lot of the wealth, people that could help rebuild the country like this family are left with little options, and it just seems to me that our ability to process papers, to deal with the sensitivities of these situations have been inadequately responded to, and I would like to work with you on this, and I also would be interested in your comments. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Our first panel consists of the Honorable Ellen Sauerbrey. Since January 2006, Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey has led the Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration. Secretary Sauerbrey formerly served as U.S. Representative to the United Nations' Commission on the Status of Women to the March, April 2001 session of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights and with the U.S. Delegation to the 2002 and 2003 Substantive Sessions of the Economic and Social Council and the U.N. General Assembly.

Ms. Sauerbrey was the minority leader of the Maryland House of Delegates, and was the 1994 and 1998 Republican nominee for Governor of Maryland. We are glad that you are here. We thank you for your wonderful service. Your entire statement will be placed in the record, and you may proceed in any fashion you choose.

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELLEN SAUERBREY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Ms. SAUERBREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished members of the committee. It is an honor to be able to appear before you today to discuss issues involving Iraq's refugees, and to detail some of the actions that the administration is taking to provide protection and assistance to Iraqis both in neighboring countries a first asylum and for the populations that remain inside of Iraq. The administration shares your concern about the dire situations facing Iraqi refugees, and we are committed to helping improve conditions for them in the countries in which they have found asylum, and we are working very closely with host governments in the region, with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Committee of the Red Cross and nongovernmental organizations.

Through these partners we are providing assistance to the most needy refugees and are seeking durable solutions including resettlement to the United States for those that require this important form of international protection. Since 2003, the administration has provided more than \$800 million to support the World Food Program, UNHCR, ICRC, the International Organization for Migration and a range of NGOs that provide direct assistance to returning Iraqi refugees, to internally displaced persons and to third country national refugees inside Iraq, and Iraqi refugees that are outside of Iraq to help meet their basic humanitarian needs and to support reintegration programs.

Humanitarian programs reinforce the United States Government's reconstruction and security efforts in Iraq. Our support has

increased the capacity of the Iraqi Government ministries working with refugees and internally displaced persons. It has provided training to nongovernmental organizations that are serving refugees and assisted numerous victims of conflict. These programs helped many of the 300,000 Iraqi refugees who returned home between 2003 and 2006 to be reintegrated into their communities, and it has helped many of the estimated 2 million IDPs inside Iraq to meet basic needs.

However, due to the upsurge in sectarian violence in 2006, this trend of repatriation that had been going well reversed and currently many more Iraqis are fleeing their homes to other areas of Iraq and to neighboring countries. UNHCR estimates that 712 Iraqis have become displaced within Iraq since February 2006 and that between 1 and 1½ million are in countries bordering Iraq, though a large percentage of them had left Iraq prior to 2003.

The current population of Iraqis in Jordan and Syria therefore is a mixture of Iraqis who departed before 2003 and the current new arrivals. Many organizations, including UNHCR, have raised concerns about the current outflow and the growing numbers of Iraqis in the surrounding countries. However, neither UNHCR nor the Governments of Jordan or Syria have definite numbers on the size of the population. UNHCR has warned that the refugee crisis that did not materialize after the invasion in 2003 is now upon us.

Although we lack firm figures on how many Iraqis are seeking refuge in surrounding countries, we do know that many left with minimal resources and are living now on the margins. Other than al-Ruwasheid, which shelters a stable population of third country nationals from Iraq, Jordan and UNHCR have not established refugee camps nor are there camps within Syria.

Anecdotal reporting indicates that many Iraqi children in these countries do not have access to schools or adequate health care. We need better information on the needs of Iraqis in the surrounding countries particularly their protection concerns, and we are encouraging the Government of Jordan to allow a comprehensive survey of the needs of Iraqis in Jordan that would guide the international community in focusing assistance and protection activities.

They are actually in the process of signing an agreement currently with a Norwegian NGO to begin this survey. The Government of Syria is also considering a survey of Iraqis in Syria, and we hope that these are going to begin in the very near future. We are not, however, waiting for precise numbers before responding to the needs that we know are there of vulnerable Iraqis. Rather, we are continuing our support to UNHCR and to NGO programs that benefit Iraqis in these countries.

In 2006, the United States provided nearly \$8 billion of UNHCR's operational budget for Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. In 2006, we also provided \$3.3 million in funding to the International Catholic Migration Commission to assist the most vulnerable Iraqis in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. In 2007, we are expanding support for these and similar programs serving needy Iraqis in neighboring countries beginning with the \$20 million appropriated in the full year continuing resolution.

An additional \$15 million is included in the President's fiscal year 2007 supplemental request, and we are identifying additional

funding to meet growing needs. The administration will continue to monitor the recent refugee and displacement situation, and the ability of the international community to address the increased needs but funding and support are important but our support for UNHCR's refugee protection mandate and our diplomatic efforts with host governments is essential to preserve the principle of first asylum, and to ensure that assistance reaches vulnerable refugees.

We formally démarched the Governments of Jordan and Syria to keep their borders open to those with a well-founded fear of persecution and to allow assistance and protection to reach these populations. In my March 9 through March 16 visit to the region, I personally appealed to Syrian and Jordanian officials to keep those borders open and to allow the international community to implement programs on behalf of the needy and vulnerable.

Jordan and Syria have been generous hosts to Iraqis for many years and have largely kept the borders open, and people have continued to flow out of Iraq in 2006. Both Jordan and Syria are also hosts to sizable Palestinian refugee populations, and we recognize the additional burden Iraqi refugees are placing on these countries.

The ministries in Egypt, Syria and Jordan cited the strain on their already overburdened education and health system. There are security concerns, and the social and economic and political consequences that they are addressing such as crime, housing costs, rising food and fuel prices that are affecting the well-being of these countries. We are working with UNHCR and host governments to see how we can help bolster their capacity to provide protection and assistance to Iraqis so that they do not overstretch social service networks and these governments' ability to continue to receive Iraqis that are seeking asylum.

Another aspect of our response to Iraqi refugee needs in the region is a planned expansion of our United States resettlement program. The United States has been resettling Iraqi refugees since the mid 1970s. To date we have resettled more than 37,000 Iraqis. The vast majority of them were victims of Saddam Hussein's regime.

Since April 2003, we have only resettled 692 Iraqis in the United States. Following the 9/11 attacks for security reasons the United States instituted an enhanced security review of existing Iraqi resettlement cases which effectively halted their admission until this requirement was lifted in 2005. Since then, resettlement of Iraqi cases has returned but only small numbers of referrals have been received because the focus of the international effort was on helping to voluntarily repatriate refugees back to Iraq.

Now, however, in light of the increased influx of Iraqis into Jordan and Syria in 2006 and early 2007, we have acted aggressively to expand our ability to offer more Iraqis refuge in the United States during 2007. One element of this expansion is to boost UNHCR's resettlement operations in the region because UNHCR has the major international mandate to make referrals to resettlement countries.

In 2006, we provided an additional \$400,000 of funding targeted to support UNHCR's building of their resettlement operations in the region. These expanded operations will increase registration efforts and will help identify vulnerable cases and boost the number

of referrals to the U.S. program and to those of other resettlement countries. We have already provided another \$500,000 for this purpose in 2007, and are prepared to do more.

The design of the refugee admissions program allows substantial flexibility regarding the number of Iraqis or any other nationality the United States can resettle in any given year. The constraints we face for Iraqi refugees are the same as those that affect our resettlement program in other parts of the world. Challenges include identifying those who are in greatest need of resettlement from among the many that are outside of the country, rapidly expanding the processing infrastructure and conducting multi-stepped security checks.

Given the large number of Iraqis in Syria and Jordan, resettlement programs will play a small but important part in the international community's overall effort to meet Iraqi refugee needs. We are working closely with UNHCR to prioritize U.S. Government resettlement for the most vulnerable Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Syria and other countries, and we are quickly building up our own processing infrastructure in appropriate locations.

I want to mention some of the special populations that have received notice from humanitarian organizations in 2006, minority populations in Iraq and Iraqis who have worked closely with the United States in Iraq. Some have called for special protection and programs for these people including religious minorities such as the Christians who have fled Iraq and those who have worked for the American Government and for United States organizations and companies.

Many of these Iraqis are in refuge in Jordan, Syria or Turkey, and may be unable to return to Iraq because they fear for their lives. We intend to ensure that these special populations receive our focused consideration and access to the U.S. resettlement program. We are encouraging them to contact UNHCR to make their needs known so that we can identify them and get them quickly into the resettlement stream. We also recognize the dangers that locally engaged Embassy staff in Iraq might face due to their association with the United States. Existing legislation created a program that allows special immigrant visas for up to 50 Department of Defense translators per year.

Secretary Rice has already written to Senator Lugar recommending expansion of this program numerically and broadening eligibility to all Iraqi/U.S. Government employees. We are also working with Embassy Baghdad to determine how we can best provide urgent protection for these and other individuals at risk because of their association with the United States Government. We are collaborating with the Department of Homeland Security and other involved agencies in utilizing appropriate immigration mechanisms.

I want to take a minute to talk about important programs the U.S. Government is supporting inside of Iraq. While recent reports have highlighted the condition of Iraqis in neighboring countries, we must not forget the populations of concern that are still inside Iraq. UNHCR and the Iraqi Government estimate that there may be as many as 2.7 million internally displaced persons and another 44,000 third country national refugees in Iraq.

The U.S. Government continues to support UNHCR, ICRC and key NGO programs inside the country that assist communities with new internally displaced persons with recently returned refugees and other victims of violence. For example, we support programs of ICRC that upgrade hospitals throughout the country and provide medical service to those who are innocent victims of the armed insurgency. We fund and provide diplomatic support to programs that seek to protect, assist and provide durable solutions for Palestinian, Turkish and Iranian refugees inside Iraq.

In 2005 and 2006, we funded the movement of over 3,000 Iranian Kurdish refugees from the al-Tash refugee camp near the strife-torn town of al-Ramadi to a safe area in northern Iraq providing permanent housing, employment programs and local integration support. We are also working closely with UNHCR and the Governments of Iraq and Turkey to enable the voluntary return of more than 10,000 Turkish Kurdish refugees from the Mahkmour refugee camp to their home villages in Turkey.

In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development continues its strong support for the protection and assistance requirements of nearly 600,000 internally displaced persons inside of Iraq. NGOs are working closely with new IDPs to provide life-saving and sustainable assistance throughout the country, food, non food items, new water and sanitation and employment opportunities. The steady increase in displacements will require additional funding in 2007. There are \$45 million in the President's fiscal year 2007 supplemental request for USAID support on behalf of IDPs in Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate your interest in Iraqi refugee issues. We know that this is a critical problem, and we are working very hard to resolve it. We look forward to working closely with you as we seek to expand protection for these Iraqis, for the third country national refugees, for the conflict victims and the IDPs, and to ensure that the vulnerable among them receive assistance, access to social services, and for the most vulnerable the opportunity to resettle to a third country.

I thank you for the opportunity to address the committee and to give you an overview of what we are attempting to do. This concludes my testimony, and I will be happy to answer your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sauerbrey follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE ELLEN SAUERBREY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee. It is an honor to appear before you today to discuss Iraqi refugees. I welcome the opportunity to detail some of the actions the Administration is taking to provide protection and assistance for Iraqis in neighboring countries of first asylum and for populations inside Iraq. The Administration shares your concern about the current situation facing Iraqi refugees and is committed to helping improve conditions for them in countries of first asylum. We are working closely with host governments in the region, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Through these partnerships, we are providing assistance to the neediest refugees and are seeking durable solutions for all of them. In keeping with international norms, past experience and the wishes of many individual refugees, it is often most appropriate to provide assistance and protection to refugees in the region until such

time as it is safe to return home. However, we also are actively pursuing resettlement to the United States for some who require this important form of international protection.

Before discussing our overall response, let me brief you on my recent trip to Egypt, Syria and Jordan. It was a productive, useful trip. All governments expressed their willingness to continue to offer assistance to Iraqis in need. In Egypt I met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, who told me the 100,000 or so Iraqis they host are straining their already overburdened education and health systems. The Egyptian government expressed security concerns because of the number of Iraqis entering on false documents. In Syria, I met with Deputy Foreign Minister Mikdad. He described the strain that more than one million Iraqis are putting on Syrian government services, such as health and education, and noted some of the social and economic consequences of the influx of Iraqis, such as crime, high rents, and rising prices. He also expressed concern about the security implications of the Iraqi presence. He said that Syria would accept international assistance and prefers to work through UN organizations. He left the door open to NGO activity as well.

The Jordanian Government also indicated its willingness to continue to help Iraqis. Officials said public schools were open to some Iraqis and indicated a need for international support to their education and health systems to cover the additional burden. However, Jordanian officials also expressed their security concerns, citing the 2005 bombings in Amman that were conducted by Iraqi extremists. In addition, we consulted closely with UNHCR and international NGOs throughout the trip. UNHCR has begun to ramp up its operations in the region, as have other international organizations and partner NGOs.

Since 2003, the Administration has provided more than \$800 million to support the World Food Program (WFP), UNHCR, ICRC, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and a range of NGOs. Inside Iraq, these programs have provided direct assistance and reintegration support to returning Iraqi refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq, and third country national refugees. For Iraqi refugees outside Iraq, we have helped meet basic humanitarian needs. Humanitarian programs reinforce America's reconstruction and security efforts in Iraq. Our support has increased the capacity of Iraqi government ministries working with refugees and internally displaced persons, provided training to non-governmental organizations serving refugees, and assisted thousands of victims of conflict. These programs helped many of the 300,000 Iraqi refugees who returned home between 2003 and 2006 to reintegrate into their own communities and helped many of the estimated two million IDPs inside Iraq to meet basic needs.

However, due to the increase in sectarian violence in 2006, this trend has reversed, with many Iraqis fleeing their homes to other areas of Iraq and to neighboring countries. Most displaced Iraqis have found refuge with host families. UNHCR estimates that between 600,000 to 700,000 Iraqis have become displaced within Iraq since February 2006 joining an already 1.2 million internally displaced and that another 2 million Iraqis are in countries bordering Iraq, though a large percentage of them had left Iraq prior to 2003. Many organizations, including UNHCR, have raised concerns about new arrivals and growing numbers of Iraqis in these countries, though neither UNHCR nor the governments of Jordan or Syria have definitive figures on the size of the population.

Anecdotal reporting from NGOs in the region indicate that many Iraqi children in these countries do not have access to schools or adequate health care, despite the stated willingness of hosting governments to allow access. We need better information on the situation and needs of Iraqis in these countries, particularly their protection concerns. The Government of Jordan on March 22nd signed an agreement with a Norwegian NGO to conduct a survey of Iraqis in Jordan, which will help guide the international community in focusing assistance and protection activities. The Government of Syria is considering a similar survey of Iraqis.

Although these surveys will be important tools, we are not waiting for precise numbers before addressing the needs of vulnerable Iraqis in neighboring countries. In February, Secretary Rice established the Iraqi Refugee and Internally Displaced Task Force, led by Paula Dobriansky, Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs, to focus and coordinate USG response and efforts. We are increasing our support to UNHCR and NGO programs benefiting Iraqis in these countries. In 2006, the U.S. provided nearly \$8 million of UNHCR's operational budget for Iraq, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. In 2006, we also provided \$3.3 million in funding to the International Catholic Migration Commission to assist the most vulnerable Iraqis in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan. In 2007, we are expanding support for these and similar programs serving needy Iraqis in neighboring countries, beginning with the \$20 million appropriated in the full-year Continuing Resolution. We have already contributed 30 percent or \$18 million to UNHCR's FY2007 Iraq Appeal of \$60 million. An

additional \$15 million is included in the President's FY07 supplemental request and we will monitor recent refugee and displacement needs and identify additional funding if necessary. The Administration will also continue to help expand the capacity of the international community to address the new needs.

Our support for UNHCR's refugee protection mandate and our bilateral diplomatic efforts with host governments have been and will remain essential tools in preserving the principle of first asylum, maintaining humanitarian space in refugee hosting countries and ensuring that assistance reaches vulnerable refugees. This was the thrust of my recent trip to the region. Jordan and Syria have been hosts to Iraqis for many years and have largely kept their borders open as people continued to flow out of Iraq. Both Jordan and Syria are also hosts to sizeable Palestinian refugee populations, and we recognize the additional burden Iraqi refugees place on these countries. We are working with UNHCR to see how we can help bolster their capacity to provide protection and assistance so Iraqis do not over-stretch social service networks and these governments' ability to continue to receive Iraqis seeking asylum.

Another aspect of our response to Iraqi refugee needs in the region is a planned expansion of our U.S. resettlement program. The U.S. has been resettling Iraqi refugees since the mid-1970s. To date the U.S. has resettled more than 37,000 Iraqis, the vast majority of whom were victims of Saddam Hussein's regime. Since April 2003 we have resettled 692 Iraqis in the United States. Following the 9/11 attacks, for security reasons, the United States instituted an enhanced security review of existing Iraqi resettlement cases that effectively halted their admission until this requirement was lifted in 2005. Since then, resettlement of Iraqi cases has resumed, but only small numbers of referrals had been received until recently. Now, we have acted aggressively to expand our ability to offer more Iraqis refuge in the United States during 2007. One element of this expansion has been to boost UNHCR's resettlement operations. In the last two years, we provided an additional \$900,000 of funding targeted to support UNHCR resettlement operations in the region. These expanded operations have increased registration efforts, thereby allowing UNHCR to identify more vulnerable cases and boosting the number of referrals to our program and those of other resettlement countries.

The design of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program allows substantial flexibility regarding the number of Iraqis (or any other nationality) the United States can resettle in any given year. The constraints we face for Iraqi refugees are the same as those that affect our resettlement program in other parts of the world. Challenges include: identifying those in greatest need from among so many; rapidly expanding the processing infrastructure; and conducting multi-stepped security checks. Clearly security checks are of fundamental importance in processing refugees from this region. Given the large numbers of Iraqis in Syria and Jordan, with some estimates as high as 1.5 million, the U.S. and other third country resettlement programs will play *a small but important role* in the international community's overall effort to meet Iraqi refugee needs. We are working closely with UNHCR to prioritize U.S. resettlement for vulnerable Iraqi refugees in Jordan, Syria and other countries. At the same time, we are quickly building up our processing infrastructure in the appropriate locations. Processing of newly referred Iraqi cases is already underway in Turkey, Syria and Jordan and will accelerate and expand into other countries as more cases are referred.

I want to recognize some of the special populations that have received attention from humanitarian organizations in 2006—minority populations in Iraq and Iraqis who have worked closely with the United States in Iraq. Some have called for special protection and programs for these people, including religious minorities such as Christians, who have fled Iraq or those who have worked for the American government or U.S. organizations or companies. Many of these Iraqis are in refuge in Jordan, Syria, or Turkey and may be unable to return to Iraq because they fear for their lives. We intend to ensure that these special populations receive the same consideration and access to the U.S. resettlement program as others and we are encouraging them to contact UNHCR to make their needs known.

We also recognize the dangers that certain individuals in Iraq might face due to their association with the United States and the management issues associated with recruitment and retention of Embassy local staff in demanding environments such as Iraq. Existing legislation created a program that allows Special Immigrant Visas for up to 50 Department of Defense translators per year. The Administration is currently working to identify the best way to broaden our existing authorities to address such situations involving local staff. We are also working with Embassy Baghdad to determine how best in practice to provide urgent protection to individuals at immediate risk because of their association with the USG. We are collaborating

with the Department of Homeland Security and other involved agencies in this regard.

I want to take a moment to talk about important programs the U.S. Government supports inside Iraq. While recent reports have highlighted the conditions of Iraqis in neighboring countries, we must not forget populations of concern still inside Iraq. UNHCR and the Iraqi government estimate there are as many as 2 million internally displaced persons and another 44,000 third country national refugees in Iraq. The U.S. Government continues to support UNHCR, ICRC, and key NGO programs inside Iraq to assist communities with new internally displaced persons, recently returned refugees, and other victims of violence. For example, we support important programs of the ICRC that upgrade hospitals throughout the country and provide medical services to those who are innocent victims of the armed insurgency. We also fund and provide diplomatic support to programs that seek to protect, assist, and provide durable solutions for Palestinian, Turkish, and Iranian refugees inside Iraq. In 2005 and 2006, we funded the movement of over 3,000 Iranian Kurdish refugees from the Al Tash refugee camp near the strife-torn town of al Ramadi to a safe area in Northern Iraq—providing permanent housing, employment programs, and local integration support. We are also working closely with UNHCR and the governments of Iraq and Turkey to enable the voluntary return of more than 10,000 Turkish Kurdish refugees from the Mahkmour refugee camp to their home villages in Turkey.

In addition, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the lead USG agency on IDP issues, continues its strong support to protect and assist internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq. USAID is also providing assistance to host communities bearing the burden of increasing IDPs. Because the steady increase in displacements will require additional funding in 2007, the President has requested \$45 million in FY 2007 supplemental funding for USAID to support IDPs in Iraq.

Mr. Chairman, we appreciate your interest in Iraqi refugee issues and look forward to working closely with you as we seek to expand protection for these Iraqis, third-country national refugees, conflict victims, and IDPs and ensure that the vulnerable among them receive assistance, access to social services, and, for the most vulnerable, the opportunity to resettle to a third country. Thank you for the opportunity to address the Committee. This concludes my testimony. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, Madam Secretary. How many Iraqis are we going to take into our country?

Ms. SAUERBREY. We have no limit, Mr. Chairman. Our limit is set only in the Presidential determination which Congress approves, and that total limit for this year was set at 70,000. The number of 7,000 I would like to speak to.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is that 7 or 70?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Seventy. 70,000. The number that you hear, the 7,000—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Seventy thousand. That is Iraqis?

Ms. SAUERBREY. No.

Mr. ACKERMAN. That is global?

Ms. SAUERBREY. No, sir. The Presidential determination for all resettlement into the U.S. this year was set at seven zero, 70,000.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You anticipate the number of Iraqis who have worked for the United States or our coalition is in excess of 100,000?

Ms. SAUERBREY. We do not really have that number. We have been talking to contractors trying to get a better understanding of how many we are addressing. At this point, I can only tell you that the number that you have heard, the 7,000 figure, is the number that UNHCR as told us that they have the capacity to refer to the United States this year. They are hoping to refer a total of 20,000 to all the resettlement countries in the world but we do not have a cap of 7,000. We will also be taking Embassy referrals. We will be taking NGO referrals, and we are also working with the Depart-

ment of Homeland Security to develop a program for family reunification.

So the number of Iraqis coming in will be coming from several different streams. However, I have to point out that because of the security measures that were put in place with the changes to the INA following 9/11, getting Iraqis into the country today is a very time consuming, there are multiple security checks that slow down the process. It is not like it was in the days of the fall of Vietnam when we were able to bring in huge numbers of people without any security measures that are currently a major issue in the resettlement program.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is it because in Vietnam despite the fact we were at war with them we decided that not everybody in Vietnam was a security risk or an evil person?

Ms. SAUERBREY. We did not have the measures in place at that time that were put in place by the Congress and by the Department of Homeland Security following 9/11.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Do you know how many Germans we took in after World War II?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I have no idea, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How many Japanese we took in after World War II?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I do not have those numbers, sir.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Do you know how many people we took in from Kosovo after the altercation there?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I cannot tell you the numbers, no.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Would you be surprised that after this being the war that has been fought longer than World War II that the number of people that we have allowed to come to this country as refugees is paltry at best?

Ms. SAUERBREY. As I explained in my testimony, Mr. Chairman, up until January, February 2005, our country, along with most of the international community, was focusing on helping to return Iraqis to Iraq.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes, but we are talking about the most vulnerable of people who cannot return to Iraq because they are going to be murdered or their family is going to be murdered or someone has already been murdered. I just find it interesting that the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees has the confidence of so many people that they did not bother liberating that at least 7,000 people have applied to them, and we do not have any way of quantifying this?

Ms. SAUERBREY. In terms of the number that have registered for protection with UNHCR, that number is more like at this point closer to 75 to 80,000 that have registered for protection. That is something that anyone who feels that they are endangered is urged to do by our Embassies, by UNHCR because it is——

Mr. ACKERMAN. How long does it take to vet somebody? If somebody has worked with our coalition or worked with our military or worked with our State Department and risked their life each and every day, putting their family in danger and at risk, how long does it take to decide that that person is worthy of us saving after they tried to save us?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Under the current restrictions that we work under, it takes anywhere from 2 to 4 months to process a refugee. That involves

Mr. ACKERMAN. And how many do we do every 2 or 4? That is one refugee every 2 to 4 months or——

Ms. SAUERBREY. No, no. It takes 2 to 4 months minimum.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And how many people do we have doing the processing?

Ms. SAUERBREY. We have ramped up. In the last several months, we have ramped up the capacity of our overseas processing entities so that we are now getting a stream of referrals from UNHCR. The first referrals are coming in from UNHCR, and we are beginning to process them.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How many can we do a month?

Ms. SAUERBREY. How many can we do in a given month with the manpower that we have? I guess the real answer is it depends on how quickly Department of Homeland Security can turn around the security checks but for——

Mr. ACKERMAN. And they can take any amount of time they want?

Ms. SAUERBREY. For an individual refugee on average it takes a minimum of 2 or 3 and up to 4 to 5 months to get through.

Mr. ACKERMAN. No, I get that. But how many can you do a month? Can we do two a month? Can we do 10 a month? Can we do 1,000 a month?

Ms. SAUERBREY. No. From the various streams that we have coming in, I think we can do at least a few hundred a month. I have to say that it depends on the manpower that Department of Homeland Security puts into the process.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And do you know how many that is?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I do not. Do you know how many are doing screening at DHS? Mr. Chairman, we will have to get you that number but we have the capacity——

Mr. ACKERMAN. I find it very frustrating when we are dealing with an administration that is supposed to be part of a unified government, and we are talking to the people who are responsible for refugees, and everything depends on somebody else, and numbers are not available, and that it is hard to understand why the department responsible for helping people resettle in the United States you know does not have these numbers at their command. I would think that is what you would do.

Ms. SAUERBREY. We are building the capacity in all three countries.

Mr. ACKERMAN. It sounds like there is——

Ms. SAUERBREY. It is not——

Mr. ACKERMAN. It sounds like a lot of foot dragging. Well let me say this. There are many people who believe that if we started in earnest bringing in the people who so many of us in a nonpartisan fashion believe deserve to be rescued because of what they did to help us and trusted us, that if we began doing that it would be admitting a failure in the war which for some reason some people do not want to come to terms with, and therefore, they will put every roadblock possible in the way of bringing these refugees over here.

When President Ford, as I referred to before, was able to do that with 131,000 people in 8 months, I do not know. Do the math. It is at least 2,000 percent better than we have done in 4 years I think.

Ms. SAUERBREY. May I respond, Mr. Chairman?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Please.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Up until last year, up until the Samarra mosque bombing, as I have tried to say, most Iraqis like most refugees anywhere in the world wanted to go home, and we were putting our resources into helping Iraqis to repatriate back to their homeland.

We think most Iraqis today and UNHCR and NGOs during my visit said most Iraqis are staying in place in the region with the hope of going home. We are building the capacity to identify and bring in the vulnerable, the most vulnerable that will not be able to go home, and we recognize that there are some who are persecuted, some who will not be able to go home, and as we get the capacity built up, we will be able to process thousands in a month. But they have to still go through the DHS security clearance process, Mr. Chairman, before they are eligible to enter the United States.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I would think that if you were serious about processing people, you could process more people in a given period of time than we have, and I find it disillusioning that at this point we are for the first time starting to ramp up. Does not anybody around here plan for anything?

Ms. SAUERBREY. There was a lot of planning that had been done for a refugee outflow in 2003, and it never materialized. It has only been in the last 6 months that there has been a significant outflow of refugees.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We have looked at the testimony of some witnesses on the next panel, and maybe we should have inverted the procedure so that we might have all heard those questions but there are some concerns and some points made.

First of all one of them being that these Iraqis who sacrificed their reputation as being loyal nationalists in their own country because they wanted freedom and democracy and are now stigmatized and jeopardized because of their efforts to help us have to wait on the long security lines to get into the U.S. Embassy, and you cannot get into the Green Zone if you are not one of those guys so that nobody can come to the U.S. Embassy, and if you cannot apply at the U.S. Embassy, you cannot keep a list.

So your answer to the questions that I have seen that you know only 160 people have applied, I mean that is a miracle that 160 people even applied. If you cannot come in from outside the Green Zone and you cannot get into the Embassy to apply, how do you expect to find these people? And I am talking specifically about the people who have risked everything.

I am not talking about the good, decent Iraqis, most of the 2 million people who find themselves in other countries, and the almost 2 million more who are displaced within their own homeland. I am talking about the thousands—and I do not know how to quantify it and you know I was hoping you could—but of those people that have risked everything to help us. Nobody kept a list of who they are?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Mr. Chairman, we know certainly who were direct hires of the United States, our Embassy personnel and others that were direct hires, but we also know that there were thousands who worked for contractors, subcontractors. We have been talking to some of the contractors, the DoD contractors who hired the interpreters, and we feel that we will be able to get those names and will be able to verify them.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I am going to wrap the gavel on myself, because I have abused the time, and I am trying not to use the clock on my colleagues but it is like amazing to me, just amazing that if we are dealing through contractors to run a war and we get no feedback from them of who the brave Iraqis are that are risking their lives and are tremendous intelligence sources of all the information that we need that we filter that through somebody who is in the profit business and not necessarily the I owe it to the Iraqi business but I owe it to my shareholders and my bank account business. That is astonishing. Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Madam Secretary, for very informative testimony.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Thank you.

Mr. PENCE. Sometimes the hardest thing to do at a hearing is hearing, and I have been listening very intently. I want to make sure I heard you right on a couple of issues. Number one, your testimony today is that until February 2005, it was the policy of the United States and of NGOs in the region and of the U.N. to repatriate Iraqis back to Iraq. Is that what I heard you to say? And that resettlement or longer term solutions outside of Iraq became a consensus policy after February 2005?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Congressman, it was February 2006. The end of February 2006 with the Sumarra mosque bombing. Up until that time, people were returning in large numbers. We helped to fund and send back 300,000 Iraqis back to Iraq.

Mr. PENCE. Okay. Thank you. Thanks for correcting me. So about this time last year was when we shifted toward a policy of permanent resettlement or dealing with refugees that might be not able to be resettled within Iraq in large numbers. Fair comment?

Ms. SAUERBREY. It was about this time last year that the sectarian violence began to cause people to be leaving again.

Mr. PENCE. Okay.

Ms. SAUERBREY. And the early ones, if I could make the point, the early people who were leaving, I think everyone agrees were the professionals. The people who had money. The people who could go buy houses and businesses in Jordan, and during that period of time there was no indication from Jordan, Syria, NGOs or UNHCR or anyone else that there were large numbers of Iraqis that had a problem in those surrounding countries.

Mr. PENCE. And you made the point several times. I think it is the Immigration and Nationality Act. After 9/11 we did create a much higher hurdle, a multi-step security process which I strongly supported at the time, and it does represent a different world than fairly could be said that we lived in, in 1975, in terms of our realization about potential threats to the country. Let me say though I really want to echo the chairman's sentiment here in the sense that I think there really is a nonpartisan sentiment among my col-

leagues to ask the question: What can we do to do better by the people who have helped us, and I would also say some of the other special populations that you referred to?

I mentioned displaced Christians from Iraq, and also people who have worked with our Embassy staff, and worked directly with United States personnel. I got a sense even in the chairman's comments—he and I do not agree on a lot of things—but I like how he put that which is how can we do better? How can we find these people?

I want to clarify that you did say that the 7,000 number as a limit that has been repeated again and again is the number of the UNHCR in terms of what they have said their capacity is, but we do not enjoy any limited capacity in terms of what we could do through Embassy referrals or other NGO referrals, is that correct?

Ms. SAUERBREY. That is correct, Congressman.

Mr. PENCE. So we could do more than the 7,000 if we made a national commitment to support through Homeland Security and through other areas of funding the processing of these people. I am very intrigued about that. What new could we do? You said that Secretary Rice has requested my senior Senator from Indiana to consider some increased funding in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee about special I think special immigrant——

Ms. SAUERBREY. Special immigrant visas.

Mr. PENCE. Can you elaborate on that? You know I am interested. The chairman has a bill. I am interested in saying what can Congress do not just to illuminate this issue but is there specific short-term action Congress can take that it will open up the portals, make more resources available to get people who have stood with us or people who are being run out of Iraq for religious persecution the ability to come to our country and resettle. Is that the kind of program that might help with that?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Thank you, Congressman. The special immigrant visa is something that we are looking at as a means of helping those who were employed, who are vulnerable because of their association with the U.S. as another means of bringing in a population but if I could just explain one thing. What we are urging is anyone that feels endangered that wants to be considered for resettlement to the U.S., who has a history of having worked for the United States, we have made arrangements through the international organization of migration that has taken over a much larger facility in both Jordan and Syria. Those people are being asked to go right to IOM's office.

IOM will collect their information, who they worked for, when they worked, and so forth. That will be transmitted back to the states. We will be able to quickly, we hope quickly through the contractors, verify that that person is who they say they are, and that they did have this association with the U.S., and gauge the level of vulnerability, and those are the people that we want to get quickly into the resettlement stream. I mean we really share your feeling that this is a moral commitment that the U.S. has to find the way to expedite this population as quickly as we can.

As far as resources, we are waiting on the supplement and the supplemental to see what additional monies we are going to have. We know that the house has put additional money. The Senate

also. So it is certainly a matter of resources as well as a matter of the security clearance. I cannot say that often enough.

Mr. PENCE. Right.

Ms. SAUERBREY. The security clearances take an extreme amount of time.

Mr. PENCE. Let me yield my time back but just say to you—as I said in my statement—I support the surge. I intend to return to the region in the next month and hope to see that some of the preliminary reports of progress on the ground in Baghdad prove out to be true, talking to the commanders on the ground. I would like to see also a diplomatic surge for us to reach out to Iraqis who have helped us, and anything your department could do with creative ideas.

I appreciated Mr. Costa's comments about wanting to work with you and with the administration to say how can we support a surge, because I think there is nothing more important than the United States of America saying to people in Iraq or anywhere in the world, if you stand by us, we will stand by you, and that is the level of urgency that I feel, and that I think we feel here but I thank you for your testimony. It was enormously informative.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. PENCE. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you. Mr. Berman.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to probe this a little bit more. We now allow under existing law the magnificent sum of 50 special immigrant visas only for Department of Defense translators. My first question is: Do you think putting aside the issue of whether refugees came as result of Saddam's brutality, as a result of our invasion, as a result of growing sectarian violence, do you think we have an even higher obligation to deal with people who worked for the United States Government, and by virtue of that work have a well-founded fear of retaliation, persecution, a jeopardy to their safety and the safety of their families? Do we have a higher obligation to that universe of people?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I do not think there is any question that we have a very strong moral obligation to those people.

Mr. BERMAN. Okay. All right. Now I understand the safety and security and background check information that is required particularly post-9/11, much of which Congress has mandated usually at the request of the administration.

But when you tell me that Secretary Rice says we need a large increase in special immigrant visas and they should not be restricted to Department of Defense translators, they should cover presumably a much wider range of people, that involves number one, authorization of the visas, number two, money to undertake the investigations, three, money to bring the people to the United States, money to resettle the people. Could you tell me how much money is in the fiscal year 2008 budget that the President submitted for this purpose a month and a half ago?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Well the original budget request was \$20 million. That was made in a budget that was started in 2005 for the 2007 budget.

Mr. BERMAN. The 2008 budget is what I am asking about. The budget that was submitted a month and a half ago by the adminis-

tration to the Congress. How much money more for Homeland Security so that 2-, 3- or 4-month step process that takes place can be utilized for a level of universe beyond 50 special immigrant visas that are now allowed?

Has the administration proposed legislation to increase the number of special immigrant visas? Has the administration proposed legislation to get rid of that restriction both in terms of number of 50 and who Department of Defense translators to put meaning behind these words that you have said Secretary of State Rice has indicated she would support? What do we have to look at for the administration's guidance on what we should do with our current law regarding special immigrant visas for people who work for the United States Government, not to even mention the different contractors who we are paying to conduct work in Iraq? Could you point to me where I can see that in writing?

Ms. SAUERBREY. There is a task force, intergovernmental task force that has been working on trying to craft a piece of legislation. I think you should be seeing it soon. I know it has not been finally signed off on by all agencies.

Mr. BERMAN. And will that legislation massively increase the number of special immigrant visas that will be allowed for these people so they will not have to go through the somewhat tortuous and lengthy process of applying as refugees? Will that legislation massively increase the number?

Ms. SAUERBREY. That legislation will vastly increase the number. Yes, sir.

Mr. BERMAN. Give me an idea of where you are looking. What is being talked about?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Five hundred.

Mr. BERMAN. How many translators do you think there are for the Department of Defense, the Embassy, the AID workers now working in Iraq? Just the universe of translators. Forget the other critical jobs.

Ms. SAUERBREY. We know that one contractor, the prime contractor I believe has over 5,000 translators. DoD translators. In terms of—

Mr. BERMAN. How about the Embassy? How about AID?

Ms. SAUERBREY. The last—

Mr. BERMAN. We have these PRTs all over Baghdad now rebuilding, holding, providing assistance. I mean there are a lot of people involved.

Ms. SAUERBREY. The last numbers that I saw of translators was in the neighborhood of 7 to 9,000.

Mr. BERMAN. Did the administration request the additional funding that we put into the supplemental that just passed?

Ms. SAUERBREY. That—

Mr. BERMAN. Or was that an add on by the Congress?

Ms. SAUERBREY. The Congress added on to what the administration requested.

Mr. BERMAN. And is that part of the Christmas tree the President was talking about or is the administration prepared to accept that additional number?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I am not able to answer that question, Congressman.

Mr. BERMAN. I will tell you what. Can you give me a time where we could see the legislative proposal that the administration will submit to us? When do you expect this interagency process to be completed?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I would hope within the next couple of weeks but until it is signed off by a number of agencies, I cannot give you an exact.

Mr. BERMAN. But this is a crisis. We read stories every day in the newspapers about people who worked for the United States military as translators and the threats made to their children and to their spouses, of brothers being killed. My guess is there is a large universe of people who are desperate to get the assistance that we are talking about here and to qualify for these special immigrant visas. Is Homeland Security going to be empowered to increase its staff in order to move through these checks that are necessary to ensure security?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I think that the main point that needs to be made here is that these special immigrant visas are for direct hires. This is not the—

Mr. BERMAN. Yes. I am not talking about a total refugee program. I am only talking about the issue of translators and my other occupational categories of people who are risking their lives by working for the United States effort in Iraq.

Ms. SAUERBREY. We would encourage the great majority of people if they are in Syria or if they are in Jordan to go—

Mr. BERMAN. I am talking about the ones in Iraq.

Ms. SAUERBREY. If they are direct hires—

Mr. BERMAN. And they are being threatened, and they are scared to death. Do they quit the job and high tail it to Jordan or do they get help from us to grant them a visa so that they can come to the United States on the special immigrant visas that are now limited to 50 a year?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Congressman, I think that those that are in great danger need to leave Iraq and need to get to Jordan because if they are really in jeopardy and they are given a visa, they are still going to have to have a security clearance, and it is not a good thing for them to be staying in a place where they are in jeopardy. They need to get to safety, and our advice through the Embassy has been if you have got someone who is endangered, get them out. Get them to safety.

Mr. BERMAN. Well I am not prepared at this point—and I will wind up—I am not prepared to either accept or reject this analysis of what these people should do. I am mostly interested in what are we going to see? What is the administration going to suggest we raise the special immigrant visa to?

How wide a group will be eligible for this? Will it just be Department of Defense translators? Will it be a much larger universe of people who will be eligible? What money is the administration going to request so that in a process that is going to take 2 or 3 or 4 months to check security, the Homeland Security is able to handle, as the chairman pointed out, many at the same time as opposed to one or two or five at the same time. These are all resource questions, and I am very happy Secretary Rice is focused on this

but unless it is also the Homeland Security, the Office of Management Budget and the White House position, it is just words.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Congressman, the reason that Secretary appointed the task force was to try to pull all these pieces together, to get all the agencies working together, and I would just submit again that this special immigrant visa, the number of 500 is considered to be adequate to cover the direct hires that it is meant for, and for those who are coming into danger because they worked for a contractor, a subcontractor, we would urgently say that the refugee program is the appropriate vehicle, and that they need to get registered quickly through IOM, get their employment verified, and get into the resettlement stream. The refugee program, unlike the visa program, provides benefits. When they come on a special immigrant visa, they come into this country with no benefit structure.

Mr. BERMAN. Well I will not even ask what the administration requested in the area of funding for increases in refugee resettlement, both in other countries and in the United States. I am sure I would be astounded by the increase they proposed. I yield back.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. BERMAN. Yes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Just briefly, how many different Iraqis have we employed or paid for information?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Employed or paid what sir?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Paid for information. Informants. How many different Iraqis got money?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I am sorry. My bureau does not deal with that. We would be happy to try to get you the information but that is not in—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Who deals with that?

Ms. SAUERBREY. It would be Intelligence, Defense.

Mr. ACKERMAN. See if you asked Intelligence and Defense and whoever that question maybe we would know the total universe that we are talking about.

Ms. SAUERBREY. We have tried to get the number, and we have not been able to successfully pin down a number.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How many people have worked for the State Department?

Ms. SAUERBREY. How many people work for the State Department?

Mr. ACKERMAN. No. How many Iraqis have worked in Iraq for the State Department?

Ms. SAUERBREY. In our Embassy?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Anywhere. In the Embassy. Outside the Embassy. On the lawn of the Embassy. Going around the country in Iraq.

Ms. SAUERBREY. We have only a very small number. I am just told by my colleague it is 157.

Mr. ACKERMAN. And there is nobody else you pay outside of that 157 that there are funds for?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Not that I am aware of. We will double check that.

Mr. ACKERMAN. But you know that one contractor has 5,000 interpreters?

Ms. SAUERBREY. DoD. A DoD contractor.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Could you get us a total of all the people that have worked for the contractors or worked for U.S. agencies or worked on behalf of the U.S. or our coalition partners?

Ms. SAUERBREY. We will try. We have been trying to get that information ourselves for the last couple of months but we will try. We will get you the best information we can.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is the other part of the government the enemy? Mr. Chabot.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Madam Secretary, if you are able to acquire the list and the numbers that the chairman has requested, I would ask that you not include any names of the people on those lists for obvious reasons. First, it was mentioned that there were a lot of Germans, a lot of Japanese, Italians as well that came here after World War II. We had a tremendous number of Vietnamese who came here after the Vietnam War as well as Cambodians and others.

These were all prior to September 11 obviously, and you have already talked about this somewhat but could you tell us once again—just refresh our memories—what are the security concerns that we have? Why did things change? Why are you so much more careful about having folks from outside the country come to this country, particularly from the Middle East quite frankly, but would you just once again inform us as to why that is?

Ms. SAUERBREY. As you know, there are Tier 1 and Tier 2 terrorist organizations that have been identified by name but the Congress created under the amendments to the INA created a Tier 3 category, a broad new definition of terrorism that said anyone basically two or more people acting together that have taken up arms perhaps in defense of their community. It created this new very, very broad definition of terrorism, and anyone that gave material support to terrorism which has been a major problem throughout our refugee program.

But clearly after 9/11, there was broad and justifiable concern of protecting the people of the United States against any form of terrorism, and so put into place through the Department of Homeland Security are requirements that there be name checks, that there be biometric checks, that there be fingerprints. Every person who comes into this country today as a refugee has to be individually interviewed and adjudicated as having a persecution claim, and then they have to pass all of the screening, and it is three or four steps screening that takes a considerable amount of time.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you. So in other words, if we have people coming here from Iraq, we want to make sure that we are not jeopardizing the safety of the American people, correct?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I think that is a fair assumption and I think we all subscribe to that concern.

Mr. CHABOT. Certainly, and thank you. And I think what we are struggling here for to some degree is especially those that have assisted the United States in assisting the people of Iraq to have a fair and free society in which they can live and raise their families and hopefully have a good and decent life, that we are struggling with protecting them, at the same time not jeopardizing the security of the American people here in this country.

Let me move on to something else here. We have also talked about you know the people that trusted us. It has been brought up a number of times. These people that trusted the United States, and one of my concerns is that you know there are those that think that regardless of how things are going there, whether or not we are moving toward success or not, that there should be some sort of timetable or date certain that we are going to pull our troops out of there, and then Iraq will go the way that Iraq ultimately goes, and I think many people believe that if we just pull out before we have secured Baghdad and secured Iraq that there will be a real civil war with complete chaos that will spill out into other countries in the region that will not only jeopardize the people living in those countries in the region but will jeopardize the United States and our security.

And my question is: Is it reasonable to assume that if we did just pull out before the country was secure and this chaos did occur that the refugee problem that we see now which clearly is a problem could pale in comparison to the refugee problem we saw if Iraq and the region breaks out into this chaos that could occur?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Congressman, I have nightmares of that thought. The most important thing for the people who are outside of Iraq for the great majority of them is a peaceful, stable Iraq to which they can return home in peace and dignity. When you have millions of displaced persons, there is no way that resettlement is going to address anything more than a very small percentage, and it is focused and should be focused on identifying and bringing to this country those who are most vulnerable, who have the least chance of going back.

The second priority has got to be maintaining the assistance level for the Iraqis who are in host countries both by helping those who are most individually vulnerable and supporting the basic social service structure of those countries. If there is a huge additional outpouring of refugees, I have great fears that those countries are going to close their borders because they are not going to continue to absorb the problems that another huge outflow would bring, and then you would really see within Iraq I think a humanitarian crisis of proportions that we cannot even imagine.

Mr. CHABOT. Thank you very much, and I will yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Madam Secretary, let us be clear. Let me make myself clear. I know that you have a difficult job. I know that our State Department and our entire country have tremendous challenges, not just in Iraq but in Afghanistan. Having said that, I want to explore more about your testimony as it relates to the case study that I opened with as it relates to definitions that you described to us on dealing with refugees and dealing with those who are in dire jeopardy, and I think we may disagree on some facts but certainly the letter I read to you would by I think any objective description be described as dire if nothing else.

You talked about special relations and the circumstances, and I thought in essence how do you define that? Is that only those that have worked with the U.S. that fall in that category?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I am sorry, Congressman. Do you mean how we are categorizing vulnerability?

Mr. COSTA. Right.

Ms. SAUERBREY. No.

Mr. COSTA. I mean those that would be available to be resettled. Be allowed to come to this country should they get through the rest of the steps, the clearance and security.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Congressman, thank you for that question because it is a very important one, and we have worked closely with UNHCR to develop 10 categories of vulnerability, and they range from those who fall into the categories of special ethnic or religious minorities, who have little hope of being able to return home and the people who have associated with the U.S. Government but also it would be a single woman trying to raise children and the man has been killed, and she has no support system, and she may become a trafficking victim without help.

The unaccompanied children who have lost their parents. Frail, elderly people who have no ability to continue supporting themselves. People with urgent medical needs. There is a whole list of categories.

Mr. COSTA. All right. I want to go through this but for the purpose of the committee if you could submit that to us I think we would all find that very helpful in terms of the definition. So am I to assume that possibly because this woman is a U.S. citizen and that certainly sounds like parts of their family have been killed, have been murdered or have been taken away, do you think there is the possibility that they would fall in that category?

Ms. SAUERBREY. People who have suffered that kind of extreme persecution I think not only can fall into that category but also can fall perhaps into an expanded category that we are working to try to develop again with the Department of Homeland Security for family reunification.

Mr. COSTA. All right. Another question and you mentioned this as it relates to the great difficulty as it relates to security clearance, and of course we are all aware of the reasoning for that post-9/11, and we are all mindful of that with regards to the Homeland Security Office. Typically because of the scrutiny, what timeline is that security clearance?

I mean you have got a situation where people are—in the case of the letter I read—are fearful of even going and purchasing groceries or having people bring groceries in. I mean obviously for all of these who fall in whatever the definition or criteria that you started to explain, how long does the security clearance take? I mean I know there is probably not one set term but I mean are we talking about 2 months? Are we talking about 6 months?

Ms. SAUERBREY. 2 to 3 months is as fast as it happens. It is more likely to be 4 to 6 months.

Mr. COSTA. The comment that was made that visas are going for—and I suspect they would not be valid visas but I can see where there would be a counterfeit market—\$10,000 on the black market, do you have any knowledge or awareness as you are trying to deal with this aspect of visas being attempted to be fabricated or sold on the black market?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I was a little confused, Congressman, by the letter because most Iraqis who are suffering from fear of death threats, persecution, extreme persecution are going to either Syria or Jordan. Syria does not require visas. Jordan has a little bit more restriction but basically you do not have to have a visa to get out of Iraq. So I am not sure whether they were talking about a visa to the United States.

Mr. COSTA. No. They were talking about a—

Ms. SAUERBREY. To the U.S.?

Mr. COSTA. Yes, to the U.S. It says, "Our family has never immigrated illegally so this is not an option for us." I am not so sure that if they were seeking 11 visas that they could afford it if it is \$10,000 per copy.

Ms. SAUERBREY. I would be happy to raise this with the Office of Consular Affairs.

Mr. COSTA. Okay. But you have not heard about a black market being established in Iraq for visas to this country?

Ms. SAUERBREY. I have not heard that.

Mr. COSTA. All right. Finally, how would you advise myself and others—I suspect many members have received similar letters from constituents—on how to proceed with a case like this and with those that whether it be for religious persecution or whether it be endangerment as certainly this is a clear case it seems to me on the best way to try to help a constituent and his family in Iraq?

I mean when we were in Jordan, Congressman Pence and I, I mean clearly the Jordanians intimated to us that this was putting a strain on them, and that was 10 months ago. I suspect it has only been further exacerbated, and I am not sure what the situation is in Syria but I have heard that certainly Iraqis that have a means to get away or get out that feel they are endangered are doing just that. I mean that is what I would do. How would you advise me to deal with this case?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Someone who is in extreme jeopardy I believe has to be advised that they need to leave the country because we cannot get them into a refugee program inside of Iraq. We have no way of processing them inside of Iraq, and as I have just indicated, if they came forward and they asked to be made a refugee, our Embassy has said we cannot bring people into the Green Zone. It is dangerous to them, and it is dangerous to the people who are in the Green Zone to try to do processing inside of Iraq.

So my advice has to be they need to get out of Iraq, and they need to go to UNHCR. They need to get registered for protection, and we need to be providing the assistance and the resettlement opportunities to be able to help them.

Mr. COSTA. Well, reclaim my own time. Madam Secretary, in this civil war that we find ourselves into, it seems to me that looking at the supplemental one and however it finally gets to the President, that we are going to have to ensure that there is necessary funding to deal with this, and certainly the dire state that exists there is I think has all of us deeply concerned, and I will be getting to you to follow up on this particular case, and I very much would appreciate your assistance.

Ms. SAUERBREY. We will be happy to look at it and see what can be done, Congressman. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Fortenberry.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this important and timely hearing. Madam Secretary, welcome. I am sorry I did not have the benefit of your earlier testimony. I apologize if some of this is redundant but I do appreciate your candor about giving advice to persons who are in grave danger, and secondly also your candor about your preparation for some of the worst case scenarios. I think this is very prudent that you are working through a categorization of vulnerable persons, and then are trying to take the next step as to how we overcome the hurdles and think through a process to deal with that successfully because this may become very severe shortly, and I think it is prudent to get in front of it so thank you.

I did want to mention something that Mr. Berman and I worked on together in regards to Department of Defense translators. It became apparent to us a number of weeks back that the cap basically was not accommodating to the number of people who had actually qualified for special immigration status, and these are people who have put their life on the line, clearly are in grave risk, and actually lived up to a commitment that they made to us, and it is only just that we accelerate a process I think to help them.

So I had dropped a bill, a simple bill saying we move that number from 50 to 300 because it was our information that that was about the backlog. Could you comment on that? Now it is not a substitute obviously for the larger, more complex issues that are present here regarding vulnerable persons as you have categorized it but this is such a pressing need I would like your feedback on that initiative.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Secretary Rice had responded months ago to Senator Lugar and supported expanding the number and the categories from Department of Defense translators to anyone who had worked for the U.S. Government in any capacity. The number that is being discussed by the interagency task force I think is about 500. So we have felt that that was an adequate number to address the people that this visa would directly cover.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Okay. Well I would suggest that first of all perhaps you would like to comment on the timeline for this interagency task force, and as we move forward to address some of the comprehensive questions that you have alluded to as well as the members today, that maybe this is a stop gap measure, because we obviously know we need to meet a commitment like this. It could be something that we would again accelerate through the process so that we are upholding our commitments to those who have so greatly sacrificed for us. So I will do my part on this end.

Ms. SAUERBREY. We were hoping that we would have interagency agreement within the next couple of weeks on a legislative proposal.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. The comprehensive type proposal regarding the questions that you have alluded to today or this specific 500?

Ms. SAUERBREY. The specific special immigrant visa proposal.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. For the 500?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Yes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. All right. And a timeline for the larger process, can you project that out?

Ms. SAUERBREY. When you say the larger process—

Mr. FORTENBERRY. Well you had gone through 10 categories of vulnerable persons: The frail, the elderly, abandoned children, perhaps mothers left alone with children, perhaps those who are under other forms of duress that we are trying to categorize, ethnicity or religious affiliation as well. Is that a part of your inter-agency task force work as well? Perhaps I misunderstood something.

Ms. SAUERBREY. These are categories from which those who are being referred or those who are registering with UNHCR for protection that are interested in resettlement, and I have to keep emphasizing that everyone does not want to be resettled. Most people want to stay in place until they can go home.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. I understand.

Ms. SAUERBREY. But of those that want to be resettled, UNHCR will make recommendations to us based on those categories of vulnerability. They are already starting. We already have referrals coming through. We have referrals from Turkey. We have referrals from Syria, and we are just starting to get referrals from Amman. We have circuit rides through DHS that are going to be out heavily over the coming months doing those individual eye-to-eye, one-on-one interviews that are required to adjudicate whether a person has refugee status under U.S. law, and if so, then the security clearance process starts, and that is what we have been talking about taking unfortunately months to get through.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. All right. So there are separate issues here.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Yes.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. One is the immediate need regarding the people who have served us, either in military or intelligence or some other capacity that allows us to give them a special status of immigration, holding up our end of the bargain. The other is the larger question as to how we work with the entire international communities to avert a humanitarian disaster but again on that first question, in 3 weeks you will have a recommendation. Is that what you are referring to?

Ms. SAUERBREY. We hope to have something within the next couple of weeks, and it will apply—I think we need to be clear—only to direct U.S. hires.

Mr. FORTENBERRY. All right. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Fortenberry. Madam Secretary, I have just a couple of more questions before our next panel but I do want to ask on behalf of all the members who have many questions if we could submit questions to you in writing and expect back an answer to those questions.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Absolutely. Thank you. We welcome that.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Rather than keep you here all day. Madam Secretary, in furtherance of the case that Mr. Costa brought up in which this family of 11 who evidently loved their nephew to the extent that they paid a ransom of \$7,000, although in vain, to get their nephew back, that \$7,000 is considered by the administration as providing material support for terrorists, and therefore these people would not be eligible to receive the protection of the United States or given refugee status?

Ms. SAUERBREY. That remains to be seen, Mr. Chairman. How it will be interpreted by DHS. The material support falls under legislation. I mean it is a law, and it will depend on whether DHS determines that this is assistance to a terrorist organization as defined in the law or whether it will be defined as a crime, and we are waiting to see how this is going to be interpreted.

Mr. ACKERMAN. It is not a crime to want your nephew. It cannot be a crime to want your nephew back.

Ms. SAUERBREY. No, no. I do not mean that the people committed a crime. I mean was it a terrorist act to kidnap this individual or will it be interpreted as a crime? If it is interpreted as a terrorist act—

Mr. ACKERMAN. I do not think you could consider it an act of love to kidnap somebody and demand a ransom or you are going to kill them.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Well, the—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Of course it is a crime. That is a crime in any country. In this country, if you cross state lines it is a Federal crime.

Ms. SAUERBREY. We are very hopeful that in this situation that this will be considered having acted under duress and that DHS will apply a waiver that it will not be considered material support but at this point we do not have—

Mr. ACKERMAN. I appreciate your good humane intentions but I would just like to point out that one of the witnesses who is about to testify wrote an article—which we will discuss I suppose—in which it indicates that a U.S. Embassy employee was disqualified under the Patriot Act because he paid a ransom to try to get somebody back. Can we help this Embassy employee? I mean what do we do about that?

Ms. SAUERBREY. A lot of activity has been going on over recent months trying to address this issue of material support, and—

Mr. ACKERMAN. These are words that are in legislation passed by the Congress. I do not think that there is one out of any 535 of us who voted on this legislation—whether for it or against it—would have ever contemplated that somebody who paid ransom to get back a loved one who was kidnapped would be materially supporting terrorists or terrorism. That clearly could not be the intent of anybody let alone the entire Congress in this legislation, and if somebody at Homeland Security or any other agency is saying that that is the intent of Congress because this person is supporting terrorism because they were the victim, then I do not know that there is any justice here.

I would think that right-minded people would conclude that the administration is just putting roadblocks in the way of people who should be allowed to come into this country as refugees because of the danger that they placed themselves in would be allowed to do so otherwise why would you tell somebody that they are aiding and abetting terrorists in a substantial way by committing an act of trying to get your loved one back?

Ms. SAUERBREY. We have been wrestling with this problem certainly for the whole past year trying to get a resolution because it has impacted our refugee admissions program from all over the world.

Mr. ACKERMAN. President Ford did not have to wrestle very long. He said, get this done, and it got done. We need some leadership. I mean your indication that you are having difficulty getting answers from other agencies of the government and my flippant remark are they the enemy, there is really a conclusion in that question. It was not really an interrogative. I think we have met the enemy, and they are us.

We are standing in our own way of doing the right, just and moral things that we have an obligation to do. A human, moral obligation to try to help those people who have risked their all to help us because they believed in our goodness, and why do we have a system in Iraq where people who are putting themselves in that position to help us are now in danger of their life and our best advice to them is run for your life, go to some other country, and we do not even help them get there.

Why do we not open up an office in different places and start processing these people in Iraq instead of chasing them halfway around the world so that they could go to some humane country with some humane national offices or international organizations that could try to help them and do the right thing? Why do we not do this? We are the Americans. We are trying to spread democracy. We are the people who are telling people that you have to be decent and respect each other.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Could I—

Mr. ACKERMAN. We are participating in a charade here. Go to Jordan. Go to Syria. Yes, go to Syria. They will help you. My God if we are telling people to go to Syria for some humane help, who are we? What have we become?

Ms. SAUERBREY. Could I respond, Congressman? Mr. Chairman?

Mr. ACKERMAN. You are gutsy if you want to try.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Truly we spent considerable time trying to figure out whether it was possible to do processing within Iraq, and the very strong advice from our Embassy was absolutely no, and one of the key problems that you have to recognize is that you do not want someone who is in danger of their life coming some place and saying, I would like to be given a visa or refugee status, and then having to sit in Iraq for 4 to 6 months while the security clearance is being done. If they are in that kind of danger, Mr. Chairman, they need to get out of harm's way, and that is why we are telling them that they need to go to a surrounding country.

Mr. ACKERMAN. If the world's only super power cannot protect them against the crisis that we have put them in, we have made a bigger mistake than I even thought. Well you have been very, very helpful, and I think you are going to have a few questions from some of the members of the committee but I want to thank you very sincerely for the help, for the information, for trying to help us muddle through this quagmire.

It is going to be very difficult, and you know the vetting procedure is very important. Nobody wants to admit terrorists in here but neither did we want to admit Nazis into our country after World War II, and there were people who did very terrible things, and I have members of my own family who I know through pictures who never had the cousins that I would have known because

they were gassed and put in ovens and burnt because nobody would accept refugees.

And there is a certain sensitivity that you develop just thinking about that, whether it is your family or somebody else's. And I think that we can do better than referring them to Syria in order to find a safe place from which to get help. So I thank you, Madam Secretary.

Ms. SAUERBREY. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. The next panel. We have a video hookup so we have a couple of minutes to allow that to happen as well.

[Recess.]

Ms. SARAH. Hello.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Is this Sarah?

Ms. SARAH. Yes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Sarah, thank you very much for testifying here in Washington through electronic hookup, and we know that we will not be revealing your real name. Please stand by while we seat the rest of the panel.

Ms. SARAH. Okay.

Mr. ACKERMAN. General Eaton, can you hear us?

Mr. EATON. I hear you loud and clear, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, General. Our second panel. First testifying by video conference we will hear from Major General Paul D. Eaton. Major General Eaton recently retired from the U.S. Army after more than 33 years of active service to the United States. His assignments included infantry command from the company to brigade levels, command of the infantry center at Fort Benning and becoming chief of infantry. His most recent operational assignment as was the commanding general of the command charged with reestablishing Iraqi security forces.

Next we will hear from Mr. George Packer, staff writer for *The New Yorker* magazine and a member of the Executive Board of PEN, the international writers organization. He is the author of an extraordinary and compelling book about the Iraq war, *The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq*, which was justly selected as a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize and was named one of the 10 best books in 2005 by the *New York Times Book Review*.

We will then hear from Mrs. Kristele Younes. Ms. Younes joined Refugees International in February 2006 after working as a legal officer with the Coalition for the International Criminal Court in Hague. As part of the Refugees International advocacy team, Ms. Younes had conducted missions to assess the plight of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons. Ms. Younes has a law degree from McGill and a master's in public international law and international organizations from the Sorbonnes.

And finally we will hear from a former employee at the U.S. Embassy, Baghdad, and the U.S. Regional Embassy in Basra. To protect her identity, she will testify by teleconference, and for the purpose of this hearing will go by the alias Sarah. To work at the Embassy Sarah had to get a security clearance. She was vetted and passed two polygraph tests. Sarah earned her bachelor's degree in English language at Baghdad University in 2000 and worked as a translator for the Iraqi Government until just before the war began in 2003.

We will begin with Major General Eaton. General, your testimony in its entirety which we do have will be placed in the record, and you may proceed as you wish.

STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL PAUL D. EATON (USA, RET.)

General EATON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, thank you very much for inviting me to this hearing. I am honored to be here. I am Paul Eaton, and my most important assignment in the United States Army was to command the coalition military assistance training team. That organization destined to reestablish Iraqi security forces.

I am not going to restate the problem. I think that has been eloquently handled by several members, and I am not going to restate the United States' reaction to the problem of Iraqi refugees. I will add only in the historical perspective that in addition to the 135,000 or so South Vietnamese that we brought to the United States, there were also several hundred thousand Lao and Cambodian refugees that we brought in.

By perspective, in 2006 my modest research reveals that we brought into the United States 84,000 Indians, 70,000 Chinese, and we have already discussed that only several hundred Iraqis have been brought into the United States. I would also like to add that the operation provide comfort that brought in a number of Iraqis immediately after the initial Gulf War operation provide comfort commanded by General Showli Pashmeeli, particularly well done and brought in a number of great citizens to the United States.

Discussion: Many Iraqis have worked in critical positions in direct support of United States operation. In my own operation, that operation destined to create the Iraqi security forces that are the answer to security in Iraq and are the means whereby we can properly exit the country, I had between 45 and 65 translators working with me at any given time. My work could not happen without the use of dedicated and loyal and patriotic translators we had with my team.

They lived with us. They had the same rights and the same comforts that we accorded our own soldiers and our Iraqi soldiers. We have a moral obligation to assist those who have allied themselves in our mission in Iraq. Failure to keep the faith with those who have thrown their lot in with us will hurt us; will certainly hurt us in future counterinsurgency efforts.

I always wrap it up with recommendations. They are fairly immature in the light of previous testimony but we must immediately identify those Iraqis who have worked closely with the United States, who are at risk, and who request the right to emigrate to the United States. Give them priority status for immigration without regard for quotas.

Two, eliminate the existing barriers to the enabling bureaucracy for immigration. The International Zone, formerly known as the Green Zone, is difficult to get into and the American Embassy more so. Engage with countries now affected by the large refugee problem and work to resolve fair share participation to stabilize the situation in anticipation of a more secure Iraq. Operation provide comfort again is a model for an in extremist refugee stabilization program.

Finally, I have worked personally on two cases apparently because one of the requirements is that an attestation from a former or active General officer is a required element of bringing an Iraqi into the United States who has performed as a translator or closely with U.S. forces. I challenge the notion that it must be a General officer. Our colonels, our lieutenant colonels, our sergeants major all are very eloquently prepared to do the right thing on behalf of Iraqis who have the right in my eyes to emigrate to the United States. Mr. Chairman, that concludes my statement. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of General Eaton follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MAJOR GENERAL PAUL D. EATON (USA, RET.)

I am Paul D. Eaton and I retired from the United States Army 1 January 2006 in the grade of Major General. From June, 2003 until March, 2004, I was the Commanding General of the Coalition Military Assistance Training Team (CMATT) in Iraq, charged with rebuilding the Iraqi Armed Forces. From March, 2004 until June, 2004, I was further charged with the development of all Iraqi Security Forces.

The Problem

The Iraq War has created a substantial refugee drama in and around Iraq. At this time, various reports reveal that there are nearly 1.9 million internally displaced Iraqis, most occurring after the initiation of large scale sectarian violence following the destruction of the Samarra Mosque in February, 2006. Key areas affected include Baghdad and vicinity and Kirkuk. Many other cities remain less affected, while the northern Kurd (most Kurds are Sunni) provinces continue to absorb large numbers of displaced Iraqis, many of whom are Sunni.

Externally located refugees, most located in Syria (1.2 million refugees) and Jordan (800 thousand refugees) are at increasing risk as resources to sustain them dry up. Military age males are frequently turned back at the borders; work visas are non-existent.

United States Reaction

Since 2003, records reveal that 466 visas have been accorded to Iraqi refugees, with an additional 50 per year accorded to translators and other Iraqis who have worked closely with the US. It appears now that for 2007 the number of émigrés authorized to come to the United States will grow to 7,000 and there is mounting pressure to admit up to 20,000.

Historical Perspective

Following the defeat of South Vietnam by North Vietnam in April, 1975, the United States allowed over 135,000 South Vietnamese to emigrate, in addition to several hundred thousand Hmong, Lao and Cambodian refugees.

In 2006, the US admitted 84,000 Indians and 70,000 Chinese.

Since the mid 1970's, the United States has allowed 37,000 Iraqis to emigrate, including the Iraqi Kurds admitted during Operation Provide Comfort.

Discussion

Many Iraqis have worked in critical positions in direct support of US operations. Many have been killed or injured in reprisals for their support of the American effort. Many more have fled the country in fear of being killed themselves. We have a moral obligation to assist those who have allied themselves in our mission in Iraq. Failure to keep the faith with those who have thrown their lot in with us will hurt us in future counter-insurgent efforts.

Recommendations

1. Immediately identify those Iraqis who have worked closely with the United States, who are at risk and who request the right to emigrate to the US. Give them priority status for immigration without regard for quotas.
2. Eliminate the existing barriers to the enabling bureaucracy for emigration. The International Zone (formerly known as the Green Zone) is difficult to get into and the American Embassy more so.
3. Engage with the countries now affected by the large refugee problem and work to resolve fair share participation to stabilize the situation in anticipa-

tion of a more secure Iraq. Operation Provide Comfort is model for an in extremis refugee stabilization program.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much, General. Please remain with us. We will next hear from George Packer.

STATEMENT OF MR. GEORGE PACKER, STAFF WRITER, "THE NEW YORKER," EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER, PEN AMERICAN CENTER

Mr. PACKER. Mr. Chairman and members of the——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Press the button. It will put your microphone on. It will light up. It is on the base.

Mr. PACKER. Is that working?

Mr. ACKERMAN. You are not a broadcast journalist.

Mr. PACKER. My first time here.

Mr. ACKERMAN. We will be gentle with you.

Mr. PACKER. Can someone help me to get this working?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Sure.

Mr. PACKER. There we go.

Mr. ACKERMAN. That is better.

Mr. PACKER. Mr. Chairman and members of the committee——

Mr. ACKERMAN. Let me just state at the outset that your testimony in its entirety will be placed in the record, and the chair asks unanimous consent to put the article written by Mr. Packer in *The New Yorker* in its entirety in the record without the cartoons.

Mr. PACKER. Let me see if I can get through this. I recently traveled to Iraq and the region for *The New Yorker* magazine to write about the group of Iraqis that we have been talking about today who have a particular claim on American intention, those who have worked either directly or indirectly for the U.S. Government and military.

One State Department official said to me that these Iraqis "are truly a unique 'homeless' population in Iraq's war zone—dependent on us for security and not convinced we will take care of them when we leave." I found that these Iraqis who supported and trusted us most now feel abandoned by us. They are targeted for death as collaborators by Sunni and Shi'a extremists alike, and they are distrusted and despised by the Iraqi Government and security forces.

They have no friends in Iraq other than us, and we in turn depend on them as vital sources of information about a country we still know all too little, and yet we have allowed our Iraqi allies to be terrorized and killed over the past few years—no one knows the number but it is in the hundreds—without making any serious effort to protect them or if necessary to evacuate them.

And of many examples, here is just one. An Iraqi I will call Ali first went to work as an interpreter for the United States military in 2003 but after seeing at least half a dozen friends killed for doing the same job, he quit and found employment in the U.S. Embassy in the summer of 2004. He was one of the direct hires. He worked there until the summer of 2006 when his family received a threat from al-Qaeda.

They had 3 days to leave their house in western Baghdad. Ali had literally nowhere to go, and he asked American officials to house him in a trailer in the Green Zone so he could continue

working at the Embassy with some degree of safety. He was told that he could only stay for a few days, and he was desperate enough to consider sleeping in his car in the Green Zone while continuing to work.

And so I would like to say that I would be a little likelier to believe that it is the safety of Iraqis that is the main reason why until now we have refused to process them in Iraq if there were a better history of looking out for their safety in the past than there has been. Having seen other Iraqis at the Embassy rejected when they made similar requests or even fired without good cause, Ali felt that he had no one to support him and decided to leave the country. He said to me, heaven does not want us and hell does not want us. Where will we go? Ali is now seeking asylum in Europe.

There is no conceivable reason why Ali and the many other Iraqis who risked their lives as friends of America should not be allowed to come here. For years the administration ignored the problem while the number of Iraqis working for the U.S. Government dwindled as a result of murder or exodus. In the past few months, under rising congressional and media pressure, there has been some action but until now there is still no clear, expeditious and safe route to the United States available to these most vulnerable Iraqis and for many of them time is running out.

Some of them who left Iraq are now considering going back because they have run out of money, and they have run out of hope. So it is an emergency, and we should not allow more Iraqis to be killed while we fine tune our refugee policy and wait for UNHCR to process them. We should find them ourselves. We have it in our capacity.

In fact, in my article in *The New Yorker* I wrote about a young American named Kirk Johnson, a 26-year-old from Illinois, who served in USAID in Fallujah who as a private citizen has taken it upon himself, using nothing but a cell phone and a laptop, to find every Iraqi who has worked for USAID, and compile a list of their current situation, and has given that list to the State Department and to UNHCR. He has compiled over 200 names acting entirely on his own. This is one private citizen. It is a little surprising that the government does not seem able to keep up with him.

Congress should oblige the administration to clarify and streamline the process of resettling our Iraqi allies and to do so with haste and here are the essential questions that the Departments of State and Homeland Security should be asked, and I have been glad to see that you are already asking them as we have seen in this hearing. Number one, will you review Iraqi requests for resettlement in Iraq itself? And if not, why not since in-country processing has been made available in other times in other countries?

Two, if the United States will not process Iraqis in Iraq, what specific steps will the administration take to help Iraqis find safe transit to other countries where they can be processed? And what resources will it commit to help them survive while they await final review of their refugee status outside Iraq? Three, where is the U.S. Government currently reviewing Iraqis for resettlement? What Department of Homeland Security resources have already been committed to the effort? And how many DHS personnel will eventually be committed to reviewing the cases of Iraqis overseas?

Four, how long will these reviews take from start to finish, country-by-country? And the 6-month figure that we heard I would really like to see it broken down very specifically into each stage of that review and why it takes a full 6 months to complete. Five, what is the administration's goal for processing and resettling Iraqis in total numbers in the next 6 months, in the next 12 months? And how many of these will be Iraqis who worked for the United States?

Six, how many Iraqis does the administration identify as falling under the special category of working for the United States? Does it include contractors who are not direct U.S. Government employees? And how will they be found, selected and prioritized for processing? And seven, will the provisions of the Patriot Act having to do with material support to terrorist be waived for Iraqis who have paid ransom to kidnappers?

These are all questions in the weeds of the bureaucracy as we say but what this issue most requires is political leadership at the highest levels. In 1975, as we have heard today, President Gerald Ford cut through the red tape and changed immigration laws almost overnight to rescue Vietnamese friends of America. President Ford later said to do less would have added moral shame to humiliation.

However the Iraq War turns out, it is a matter of national honor that we save those Iraqis who sacrificed everything to help the United States. If we do less, history will find moral shame in all of us.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Packer follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MR. GEORGE PACKER, STAFF WRITER, "THE NEW YORKER,"
EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBER, PEN AMERICAN CENTER

The war in Iraq has produced one of the world's gravest refugee crises, with close to two million Iraqis having fled the country and another 1.9 million internally displaced—one in every seven Iraqis uprooted from home, and every day hundreds or even thousands more. They are all leaving for one reason: to escape violence, whether it comes from insurgents, militias, American and coalition forces, or criminal gangs. But there is one group of Iraqis, some of whom are refugees and others who are not yet, that is particularly vulnerable and has a particular claim on American attention: those Iraqis who have worked, either directly or indirectly, for the United States government and military in Iraq. They are, as one State Department official said to me, "truly a unique 'homeless' population in Iraq's war zone—dependent on us for security and not convinced we will take care of them when we leave."

I recently traveled to Iraq and the region to report on this story for an article published in last week's New Yorker Magazine. I spoke with dozens of Iraqis who have worked for the U.S., as well as numerous American officials and soldiers. The Iraqis who supported and trusted us most, who welcomed the overthrow of the Saddam regime and shared our vision for Iraq's future to the extent that they were willing to risk their lives for it every day—as interpreters, office managers, secretaries, contractors, drivers—now feel abandoned. They are targeted for death as collaborators by Sunni and Shia extremists, and they are distrusted and despised by the Iraqi government and security forces. They have no friends in Iraq other than us. And we, in turn, depend on them as vital sources of information about a country we still know and understand all too little. And yet we have allowed our Iraqi allies to be terrorized and killed over the past few years (no one knows the number, but it is in the hundreds) without making any serious effort to protect them or, if necessary, evacuate them. Of many, many examples, here are two.

The first is Yaghdan, a thirty-year-old whom I met in January. Yaghdan—who insisted that I use his real name, which tells you something about his character—worked for the U.S. Agency for International Development from 2003 until 2006. Last October, as he was going into his garage, he found a note that said, "We will cut off heads and throw them in the garbage." Nearby against his garden fence lay

the severed upper half of a small dog. Yaghdan realized that, in spite of the elaborate precautions he took every day, a neighbor who worked for a Shia militia had recognized him entering the Green Zone. He reported the incident to his American superiors and was advised that he had two choices: either leave the country, or move into the USAID compound in the Green Zone, which would mean leaving his wife at home. Yaghdan's request to be transferred to another USAID mission in the region received no answer. Forced to choose between his job and his family, he left Iraq with his wife and went to Dubai. But the United Arab Emirates, like most of Iraq's neighbors, has not welcomed the Iraqi refugees, and Yaghdan's visa expires at the end of this month. Rather than living on illegally in Dubai he is seriously thinking of going back to Iraq, which he called "like taking the decision to commit suicide."

The second is an Iraqi I will call Ali. Ali first went to work as an interpreter for the U.S. military in 2003, but after seeing at least half a dozen friends killed for doing the same job, he quit and found employment in the U.S. embassy in the summer of 2004. He worked there until late 2006, when his family received a threat from al-Qaeda to leave their house in western Baghdad within three days. Ali had literally nowhere to go, and he asked American officials to house him in a trailer in the Green Zone so he could continue working at the embassy with some degree of safety. He was told that he could only stay for a week or two. Having seen other Iraqis at the embassy rejected when they made similar requests, or even fired without good cause, Ali felt that he had no one to support him and he decided to leave the country. "Heaven doesn't want us and Hell doesn't want us. Where will we go?" he said. Ali is now seeking asylum in Europe.

There is no conceivable reason why Yaghdan, Ali, and many other Iraqis who risked their lives as friends of America should not be allowed to emigrate here. For years, the administration ignored the problem while the number of Iraqis working for the U.S. government dwindled as a result of murder or exodus. In the past few months, under rising congressional and media pressure, there has been some action: a State Department task force has been formed, with talk of admitting seven thousand Iraqis after they are processed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. But until now, there is still no clear, expeditious, and safe route to the U.S. available to these most vulnerable Iraqis. And for many of them, time is running out.

I know this first-hand, both from my ongoing contact with Iraqis whom I met during my trip to the region, and as an executive board member of PEN, the international writers organization. PEN American Center has been working to resettle Iraqi writers and translators targeted for death since September 2005, when it received a desperate appeal for help from a group of seven translators from the Mosul area. All of them had received clear, explicit death threats, and most had either survived lethal attacks themselves or had close family member killed in their place. Within a year, two from that original group had been assassinated. Since then, as its case list has grown, PEN has managed to find refuge for seven writers and translators and their families in Europe, mostly in Norway. It has also been pursuing the much more difficult goal of helping some of those on its list reach the U.S. For one group that has been living in hiding in Syria, there has been some progress: last month five were screened by the office of the UNHCR in Damascus and have been referred to the United States for possible resettlement. Now they are waiting for the opportunity to interview with U.S. officials. While they wait, like all Iraqis in Syria they are barred from holding work permits, and several have exhausted their limited financial means. So far, they have received no information on when U.S. interviewers will be in Damascus.

PEN is also working on the cases of several men and women who are essentially trapped inside Iraq, unable to flee the country for lack of resources or for fear they will be killed if they attempt to move. The list includes former translators for Coalition forces and media outlets, two of whom were wounded in attacks, and a teacher and writer targeted for writing articles denouncing terrorism in Iraq. With no avenue available for those still in Iraq to apply for refugee status or seek resettlement, they are waiting, too, for any indication that a system exists where they can present and plead their cases.

[I would note that the lack of navigable systems inside Iraq affects even those who have clear, definite invitations from abroad. Writers and scholars who have been offered fellowships and temporary appointments in U.S. universities, for example, are unable to apply for visas because they possess the discontinued, and no longer recognized, "S" passports. This bureaucratic snafu means that the huge majority of Iraqis are basically confined to their country, barred even from normal international exchanges and travel.]

Congress can play a vital role in obliging the administration to clarify and streamline the process of resettling our Iraqi allies, and to do so with haste. Here are the essential questions that the Departments of State and Homeland Security should be obliged to answer about their current efforts:

1. Are there any plans to review Iraqi requests for asylum in Iraq itself? If not, why not (since "In-Country Processing" has been made available at other times in other countries)? If so, when will the reviews begin, with what resources, and at a capacity of how many cases per month?
2. If the U.S. will not process Iraqis in Iraq, what specific steps will the administration take to help Iraqis find safe transit to other countries where they can be processed, and what resources will it commit to help them survive while they await final review of their refugee status outside Iraq?
3. Where is the U.S. government currently reviewing Iraqis for resettlement? What Department of Homeland Security resources have already been committed to the effort? And how many DHS personnel will eventually be committed to reviewing the cases of Iraqis overseas?
4. How long will these reviews take from start to finish, country by country?
5. What is the administration's goal for processing and resettling Iraqis in total numbers in the next six months?
6. How many Iraqis does the administration identify as falling under the special category of "working for the United States"? Does the category include contractors who are not direct U.S. government employees? How will these Iraqis be selected and prioritized for processing?
7. Will the provisions of the Patriot Act having to do with "material support" to terrorists be waived for Iraqis who have paid ransom to kidnappers?

These questions are, as they say, in the weeds of the bureaucracy. But what this issue most requires is political leadership at the highest levels. In 1975, President Gerald Ford cut through all the red tape and changed immigration laws almost overnight to rescue Vietnamese friends of America. By the end of that year, over 130,000 had been accepted as immigrants. President Ford later said, "To do less would have added moral shame to humiliation." However the Iraq war turns out, it is a matter of national honor that we save those Iraqis who sacrificed everything to help the United States. If we do less, history will find moral shame in all of us.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. Ms. Younes.

**STATEMENT OF MS. KRISTELE YOUNES, ADVOCATE,
REFUGEES INTERNATIONAL**

Ms. YOUNES. Thank you very much. I would like to thank the committee for holding this hearing on the plight of displaced Iraqis, an enormous and rapidly growing humanitarian problem that is still not effectively addressed by the international community or the United States. In November of last year, my colleague and I went to Syria, Jordan and Lebanon to assess the humanitarian situation of the Iraqis there, and we discovered what really is the fastest growing displacement crisis in the world. Today there are more than 2 million Iraqis that are displaced in the region, and this has added to more than 1.9 million Iraqis that are displaced within their own country.

Violence in Iraq is both extreme and indiscriminate. Iraqis flee violence because of sectarian reasons with the minorities of course being particularly at risk, and some are also targeted because of their professions. Of course those who work with the U.S. but also some academics, even some hairdressers whose profession is deemed to be anti-Islamic by some. Since 2003, more than 2,500 doctors have been assassinated in Iraq because of their profession.

The 2007 global needs assessment by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office ranks Iraq as among the 15 most severe humanitarian crises in the world. Of those 15 crisis, the U.N. Of-

fice for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs rates Iraq as the second lowest funded crisis for affected person. Yet despite recent positive steps, no Iraqi, United States or U.N. institution is taking this growing humanitarian crisis seriously enough to mount an effective and adequate response.

A colleague and I just returned from northern Iraq where we surveyed the growing internally displaced population and their problems they face. We also visited Egypt, which is hosting a growing number of refugees. Last week Refugees International issued a report the world's fastest growing displacement crisis, displaced people in Iraq receiving inadequate assistance. I would like to submit a copy for the record.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Without objection.

Ms. YOUNES. I would like to start by talking to you about the situation of Iraqi refugees. As I mentioned, there are over 2 million in the region. The first thing that I think is important to mention is that it is extremely difficult for Iraqis to leave the country. First of all, the roads to Syria and Jordan are extremely dangerous. One Shi'a we met in Jordan actually said that for a Shi'a to go through the Anbar province and reach the Jordanian border was like playing a game of Russian roulette. He had one chance out of two to come out of it alive.

Getting a passport is also extremely expensive, and it is also extremely dangerous to make their way to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Baghdad. Of the 2 million Iraqi refugees that are now in the region, over 1 million are in Syria, 750,000 in Jordan. Most of them get there with tourist visas. They are quickly running out of resources. Even those who come from Iraq's middle class and who had some when they arrived in those countries because they cannot work in those countries, they cannot sustain themselves any more, and most are now in need of dire assistance.

Many arrived in a state of shock. One Shi'a man we met in Beirut told his—his voice shaking and his hands shaking—that he could not sleep at night completely traumatized by his kidnapping ordeal. The impact on the region must also be mentioned. The first impact of course is economical. Syria and Jordan are not rich countries. They are now hosting incredible amount of refugees. One million Syria, as I mentioned, and 750,000 in Jordan. Real estate prices are rising in both countries, and resentment amongst host communities is rising as well.

Jordan and Syria are also very scared that the instability that we are now seeing in Iraq spread to their own countries. As a result, some of the regional countries have shut their borders to Iraqi, and it is now increasingly difficult to leave the country for most Iraqi. Jordan is not letting young men cross into its territory, and has now restricted access to most of the Iraqi population. Syria remains the only safety valve open with 40,000 Iraqi crossing every month.

It is important to recognize the role that Syria and Jordan have been playing in hosting such amounts of Iraqis. However, we must also note that those countries are not signatories to the 1951 convention on the rights of refugees, and therefore refugees have very little protection in those countries. They have no right to work, and even when they can access public institutions and public systems,

those are quickly becoming overburdened. They need our assistance now.

Our experience in the region was slightly different than that of Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey. Most of the Iraqis we have spoken to were telling us that they never want to go back to Iraq. They fear for their lives. They feel that now that they have been identified as being Sunni, Shi'a, pro-American, an academic, they can never return because revenge will be enacted against them and their family. Most of them are trying to get to Europe and North America, and we have actually met many who are trying to buy counterfeited passports and visas.

We would like to draw your attention to two particularly vulnerable groups. The first one we have spoken about already which is the Iraqis that have been linked to the American effort inside Iraq. For this particular group of Iraqis, Refugees International recommends that the United States facilitate the admission to the United States of that particular group. The most rapid way to process them would be the expansion of the special visa numbers for U.S. interpreters and their family currently limited to 50 a year. We are glad this is being considered by the administration.

For others, we recommend a creation of a P2 category for refugee processing that would permit former employees to bypass UNHCR and register directly for refugee resettlement consideration by the U.S. A third method to handle this population with special ties to the U.S. would be the enactment of either a special immigrant visa or the creation of a humanitarian parole admission that would permit these families to receive benefits similar to refugees and to have the ability to adjust their status.

Another vulnerable group we would like to mention are the Palestinians inside Iraq perceived by many as being loyal to Saddam Hussein because they were favored under his regime. They are now targeted by all groups inside Iraq, and because of their statelessness have nowhere to go.

Until recently the response to the refugees' needs was slow and inadequate. There have been, however, encouraging signs. UNHCR has increased its budget. It is now increasing its teams in the region. It is also organizing conference in April, a very large ministerial conference to address the needs of the displaced Iraqis. We strongly hope that the U.S. will be sending the Secretary of State to show the U.S.' commitment in addressing this crisis, and its commitment in taking a leadership role.

We also welcome the administration offer to some 7,000 refugees but the amounts that the administration has requested for refugee assistance and the admissions offered are far too small given the level of needs. We appreciate the close collaboration between U.S. State and State Department's Refugee Bureau in developing programs for those displaced inside Iraq. We would recommend a tripling of these efforts as well as tripling the numbers considered for resettlement.

We remain concerned, as you are, Mr. Chairman, that some refugees, victims of violence, rape, death threats and kidnapping may be found inadmissible to the U.S. because they have been forced in self-defense to provide material support to an organization the U.S. deems to be terrorist, and thus be barred from admission. We hope

the Congress this term will carefully reconsider such bars to admission for those who are the innocent victims of terrorists.

Finally, host countries, particularly Jordan and Syria, need multilateral and bilateral assistance in shouldering the burden of the refugee population. In January, Refugees International warned the Senate Judiciary Committee that the worst outcome would be for Iraq's neighbors to close their borders to Iraqi, thus shutting off a safety valve that is saving lives. Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt have now severely restricted entry to Iraqis, and Syria remains alone in absorbing over 40,000 new arrivals every month.

We urge the United States to work with its allies in countries in the region to make it possible to assist displaced Iraqis in need, to find temporary refuge and safety, whether inside Iraq or in the region, and to find new places for those most vulnerable refugees who cannot remain in the region. Although we are now committed to resettling 7,000, this is a very small number compared to what the needs are. We must also focus on assisting the millions who are remaining in the region.

Displacement inside Iraq is also growing increasingly. There are now 1.9 million displaced inside Iraq, 730,000 since the Samarra bombings of February 2006. A Balkanization phenomenon is taking place in Iraq with people leaving heterogeneous zones to more homogenous ones. We met a Sunni man who was born and raised in Basra but who had to leave because his life was in danger being Sunni in that region. Internal borders have sometimes been closed. Karbala Kavornorat which used to be a safe haven for Shi'a is now not accepting people anymore because its systems are completely overburdened.

My colleague and I visited the Kurdish area of Iraq last month. The Kurdish areas are one of the safest areas in Iraq, and are now hosting according to the Iraqi Red Crescent Society over 160,000 persons who have fled there since 2003. During the 2-week survey of conditions in this largely autonomous area, Refugees International found that many of the internally displaced are struggling to survive. They are victims of inattention, inadequate resources, regional politics, and bureaucratic obstacles.

Getting to the north is not easy either. One must go through a series of security checkpoints and having a guarantor, a Kurdish resident who can attest to the identity and morality of the displaced, is also a condition. Many Kurds who are trying to move up north from disputed areas such as Kirkuk are being sent away because the Kurdish authorities want to keep their voting constituency in those areas that are supposed to go through a referendum within this year.

The main problems for IDPs in Kurdish areas are economical. They face an inflation rate of over 70 percent, and fuel and electricity prices have increased 270 percent in the course of 2006. It is extremely hard to find work even for professionals. Only 1 percent of the displaced in Iraq are in camps. The rest have to pay rent, a rent that is increasingly high, especially in the Kurdish regions.

In the town of Shaklawa, for example, which is hosting 215 IDP families, 10 had to leave in the month of February alone and go back to often very dangerous places because they could not afford

to live there any more. Before 2003, most of Iraq's population was benefitting from the public distribution system put in place by the oil for food program. The assistance provided by the system food and fuel was vital for most of Iraq's population, and it is now more than ever as the economical situation keeps deteriorating.

Unfortunately, because the public distribution system is now linked to the voter registration system, basically cards are being issued in the town of residents and your card to receive food rations is the same card you use to vote, it is incredibly difficult to transfer food ration cards. The displaced are now not only leaving their homes and their lives behind, they are also leaving the possibility of having this very vital assistance.

Refugee International believes it is essential that institutions such as the U.S. Agriculture Department or the U.N. World Food Program immediately seek to assist the Iraqi Government to overcome these problems, and devise an improved and more effective public distribution system to get these resources to the displaced.

The response to the needs of Iraqis inside the country, displaced Iraqis, has been insufficient both from a national and an international level. The national government is unable or unwilling to address the needs of the displaced. It is reluctant to admit the state of displacement in Iraq, and this is leading international donors to question whether funds are needed as the Iraqi Government is allegedly sitting on billions of dollars of unspent funds.

Increased funding to organizations such as the Iraqi Red Crescent Society and the international committee of the Red Cross by the United States and other donors could dramatically improve the conditions for the displaced. The U.N. response since 2003 has been largely nonexistent. The U.N. until recently was treating Iraq as a reconstruction situation, rehabilitation context. It is now only started to speak about a humanitarian crisis last month.

UNHCR, who has the primary responsibility in the Kurdish areas and in the south, has only \$9 million to address the needs of the displaced in 2007. One UNHCR official told us that if it was needs based alone then even \$150 million would not be enough to address the needs. The U.S. and other donors should fully fund all appeals from both UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration that are addressing the needs of the displaced throughout the country.

Finally, the United States and Iraq are finding it difficult to stop the violence in Iraq. Until they do, the flood of internally displaced and refugees will continue. While we do not know yet how to stabilize Iraq, we do know how to protect and support displaced Iraqis. We must continue and substantially increase our efforts to do so now, multilaterally and bilaterally. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Younes follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MS. KRISTELE YOUNES, ADVOCATE, REFUGEES
INTERNATIONAL

I want to thank the Committee for holding these hearings on the plight of displaced Iraqis, an enormous and rapidly growing humanitarian problem still not effectively addressed by the international community or the US.

Last November, Refugees International visited Lebanon, Syria and Jordan to assess the situation of Iraqi refugees there and discovered the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world. The amount of displacement is huge and getting worse. To date two million Iraqis have fled the violence in their country; most have taken refuge

in Syria and Jordan. Iraqis were leaving the country at the rate of 100,000 a month until Jordan recently moved to shut its borders, sharply cutting the flow. Within Iraq, 1.9 million people have left their homes and moved to safer areas within the country. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that one million additional Iraqis will become internally displaced by the end of the year. Right now, 15% of the population of Iraq is displaced, either internally or externally, but that number could be more than 20% by the end of this year.

Some of the refugees and displaced people are particularly vulnerable because they worked for the U.S. as translators and in other jobs and are now targeted by anti-U.S. groups. They risked their lives for the U.S. and deserve special protection now.

Until Refugees International began highlighting the size and pace of the displacement crisis last year, little was being done to help the displaced or the countries that are sheltering them. In the last few months UNHCR has sharply increased its budget for the region and the U.S. has announced plans to accept up to 7,000 Iraqis for resettlement in the U.S. These small steps begin to address the growing displacement crisis, but much more needs to be done.

The 2007 Global Needs Assessment by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid ranks Iraq as among the 15 most severe humanitarian crises in the world. Of those 15 crises, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs rates Iraq as the second lowest funded crisis—per affected person. Yet, no Iraqi, U.S. or U.N. institution is taking this growing humanitarian and displacement crisis seriously enough to mount an effective response. The most urgent need is a program to protect the most vulnerable—people who had to leave their homes because they worked for and with U.S. forces, diplomats and contractors.

The violence in Iraq is both extreme and indiscriminate. Many are fleeing within and outside of Iraq to escape sectarian violence that is causing *de facto* ethnic cleansing. Both Sunni and Shi'a are leaving mixed neighborhoods because they no longer feel safe outside of their own communities. Christians are leaving as well, because they also are threatened. Many Iraqis are targeted because of their profession. According to the Brookings Institute, more than 2500 Iraqi physicians have been killed since 2003, and many academics, artists and even hairdressers are also threatened by individuals who believe such occupations are "anti-Islamic." Many of the refugees are middle class and non-sectarian—exactly the people Iraq needs to rebuild.

A colleague and I just returned from northern Iraq, where we surveyed the growing internally displaced population and the problems they face. We also visited Egypt, which is hosting a growing number of refugees. Last week Refugees International issued a report, *The World's Fastest Growing Displacement Crisis: Displaced People Inside Iraq Receiving Inadequate Assistance*. I would like to submit a copy for the record.

IRAQI REFUGEES

The UN estimates that there are now over 2 million Iraqi refugees seeking safety in neighboring countries and the numbers continue to grow. Most enter under short term visas which have to be renewed and which do not permit employment. Syria and Jordan have received the greatest number: over 1 million in Syria and about 750,000 in Jordan. Others forced out of Iraq are seeking refuge throughout the Middle East, with growing numbers in Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen and Turkey. Syria and Jordan have tried to be gracious hosts, but the refugee influx is putting enormous strains on their economies. Initially many came with resources, but with the passage of time many have exhausted their resources and those of their families and friends. Some of the newer arrivals are poorer. The host countries are now admitting that they need help. The Iraqis who fled were able to find safety in their country of asylum, but many now require assistance to meet their basic needs.

Today the Iraqi refugees are a regional challenge. Some local populations and governments fear that the instability in Iraq might spread to the rest of the region. Some countries, concerned about their security and worried that large influxes of refugees could overburden their own fragile economies and government services have closed their borders. It is now increasingly difficult for Iraqis to get into Egypt. Lebanon and Jordan have proceeded to deport some individuals back. An Iraqi woman in Cairo told us she could not go to her mother's funeral in Baghdad as she would not have been able to return to her children in Cairo.

Faced with bleak future in the region, some Iraqis are considering other options. In Amman, Jordan, Damascus, Syria, and Cairo, Egypt, many Iraqis told us they are trying to purchase fake travel documents that would allow them to go to Eu-

rope. Most Iraqis do not expect to be able to return home soon and without some assistance they may be unable to survive.

RI found two particularly vulnerable groups—people who have worked for U.S. or Western employers and Palestinians. Many Iraqis who worked for the U.S. the military or other American public and private agencies, are seen now as siding with the “occupiers” or “occupiers” themselves. When interviewing Iraqi refugees in Amman, we encountered Yasir, who had worked as a security officer for several western civil society agencies in Baghdad. Last July he and his son were in front of their house, when gunmen fired 10 shots at them from a speeding car, severely injuring Yasir. He is confident he was targeted because he worked for international aid organizations. Yasir heard from his neighbors that the gunmen learned that he survived the attack; so four days later he fled to Jordan.

RI recommends that the U.S. facilitate the admission to the United States of those Iraqis who were endangered by their affiliation with the US effort in Iraq. The most rapid way to process them in our view, would be the expansion of the special visa numbers for US interpreters and their families, currently limited to 50 a year from Iraq and Afghanistan. There should be no limit on protection, particularly those whose lives are at risk because they helped the U.S., as long as they meet the security and other standards for admission to the U.S. For others, RI recommends the creation of a P2 category for refugee processing that would permit former employees to bypass UNHCR and register directly for refugee resettlement consideration by the U.S. . A third method to handle this population with special ties to our country would be the enactment of either a special immigrant visa or the creation of a humanitarian parole admission that would permit these families to receive benefits similar to refugees and to have the ability to adjust their status.

Palestinians received special treatment from Saddam Hussein, who often moved Shi'a out of their houses to give Palestinians a place to live. Now, labeled as Saddam loyalists, they are targeted and attacked by almost all factions and the subject of a “fatwa” calling for their killing. The 15,000 still in Iraq are in danger and in need of rescue and resettlement as are those who managed to escaped as well as those still stuck camping in no man's lands between Iraq and neighboring counties. Their statelessness increases their vulnerability.

Most of the Iraqis who have left the country are middle class; they had to have some means to reach the border and get out of Iraq. Also getting a passport in Baghdad is an expensive, dangerous ordeal. Most Iraqis now are urban refugees, living sometimes on their own, often with family members or friends. Many arrive in a state of shock. One Shi'a Sheikh in Beirut told us, his voice shaky, that he could not sleep at night, traumatized still by his kidnapping. Neither Syria nor Jordan, which house the largest Iraqi populations, have signed the 1951 Refugee Convention, so people find it difficult to get official refugee status.

Syria, Jordan and Egypt deserve international recognition for accepting the Iraqis in such large numbers. But the burdens can cause tensions.. Real estate prices and rents are rising quickly in Damascus and Amman and certain areas of Cairo; schools and hospitals are crowded. Jordan has tightened its borders since bombings in Amman in November 2005, and it is particularly difficult for Iraqis, especially men between the ages of 18–35, to enter. Syria, which used to grant free health care to refugees, has started to charge. Although Egypt is a signatory to the Refugee Convention, it does not allow refugees access to public healthcare or education.

In all three countries, refugees are finding it difficult to get jobs as they are not legally allowed to work. Omar, a doctor we met in Amman told us he would be willing to clean houses if only someone would hire him. The UN is now attempting to assess the numbers of refugees in need. But largely urban refugee populations can be difficult to reach, since many refugees are reluctant to register with the UNHCR or local authorities for fear of deportation.

Until recently the international response had been slow and inadequate. In 2006, for instance, the UNHCR budget for Iraqi refugees in Syria was \$700,000—less than one dollar per refugee. Now there are some encouraging signs the world is beginning to recognize and respond to Iraq's growing displacement problem. UNHCR appealed for an initial \$60 million budget to staff up its ability to screen vulnerable refugees in need of resettlement and to develop a comprehensive regional program. It has already increased the size of its staff in the region. UNHCR will hold an international conference at the ministerial level on Iraqi refugees in Geneva next month. RI hopes that the US will be represented by our Secretary of State to demonstrate U.S. interest in burden sharing, particularly with the countries of the region. The UN Refugee Agency is talking with donors and the countries of the region and other UN and international organizations and NGOs about the size and type of programs that would be most effective. We urge the United Nations to make assistance and protection of refugees whether inside or outside of Iraq a major priority this year

and to quickly undertake programs to alleviate pressures on countries of asylum by assisting in the provision of humanitarian aid to those communities most in need.

RI commends the Administration's offer to resettle some 7,000 refugees found eligible under US law and its request to Congress for additional funding in 2007 and 2008 for resettlement and for overseas assistance to these IDPs and refugees. But the amounts requested and the admissions offered are far too small, given the level of need.

RI appreciates the close collaboration between US AID and State Department's Refugee Bureau in developing programs for those displaced inside Iraq. We would recommend the tripling of these efforts as well as tripling the numbers considered for resettlement. RI remains concerned that some refugees victims of violence, rape, death threats, and kidnappings may be found inadmissible to the US because they have been forced in self-defense to provide "material support" to an organization the US deems to be terrorist, and thus be barred from admission. We hope the Congress this term will carefully reconsider such bars to admission for those who are the innocent victims of terrorists.

The U.S. has a special obligation to help the refugees of Iraq. The US must provide increased, fast and adequate funding to all relevant agencies, so that programs for the most vulnerable can be put in place immediately, in and outside of Iraq.

Finally, host countries, particularly Jordan and Syria, need multilateral and bilateral assistance in shouldering the burden of the refugee population. This means programs to help in sharing the costs of those who stay, and assist both Iraqis and vulnerable individuals in the host communities. Building the capacity of the host countries systems in particular is a priority. In Jordan, for instance, the Kingdom's 3200 schools are overcrowded with over 1.5 million students. Funding and assistance to build new schools would go a long way towards improving access to education for both Jordanian and Iraqi children.

In January, RI warned the Senate Judiciary Committee that the worst outcome would be for Iraq's neighbors to close their borders to Iraqis, thus shutting off a safety valve that is saving lives. Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt have now severely restricted entry to Iraqis, and Syria remains alone in absorbing over 40 000 new arrivals every month. We must now increase our diplomatic efforts to urge countries in the region to help end the conflict and to stop threatening to deport innocent Iraqis back to an environment of violence and unrest. We urge the US to work with its allies and countries in the region to make it possible to assist displaced Iraqis in need to find temporary refuge and safety whether inside Iraq or in the region, and to find new places for those most vulnerable refugees who cannot remain in the region.

INTERNALLY DISPLACED IRAQIS

The UN estimates that there are now 1.9 million displaced within Iraq. This includes one million people forced from their homes before 2003 and an additional 727,000 displaced since the 2006 February bombing of the Samarra mosque. UNHCR is projecting internal displacement might increase by as much as one million more people this year. Iraq is becoming Balkanized. Formerly mixed neighborhoods are disintegrating into Sunni and Shiite redoubts, all afraid of one another, and leaving minorities such as the Christians or the Mandeans with no safe place to go to. A Sunni imam born and raised in Basra, a largely Shiite area, told us: "I used to have Shiite friends and neighbors. But everything changed. After I was beaten up and threatened several times, I had to leave to protect my family."

According to estimates by the Iraqi Red Crescent Society, he is one of 160,000 Iraqis who have moved to Iraq's most stable region, the three governorates of Dohuk, Erbil and Suleimaniya in the north. During a two week survey of conditions in this largely autonomous area administered by the Kurdish Regional Government, Refugees International found that many of the internally displaced are struggling to survive. They are victims of inattention, inadequate resources, regional politics, and bureaucratic obstacles. But as one woman who fled north from Baghdad said, "Here at least, we are safe."

The autonomous Kurdish region, protected by its own security forces, is largely immune to the violence in other parts of Iraq. Kurds, Christians, Sunni and Shiite Arabs are all trying to resettle there. Getting in is not easy, as the displaced need to have a guarantor, a Kurdish resident of one of the three Northern Governorates, who can attest to their morality and identity. Single Arab men rarely get admission, Refugees International found that it is harder for Muslim Arabs to gain entry than for Kurds, or for Christians—who sometimes get preferential treatment.

In addition, Kurds from disputed areas such as oil-rich Kirkuk or Khanaqein, whose status is to be settled by referendum later this year as stated in both the

Constitution and national law, are systematically discouraged or even prevented from moving into the Kurdish provinces. Kurdish authorities actively discourage Kurds from leaving Kirkuk and other disputed towns and forces them to stay for the referendum rather than resettle in existing, recognized Kurdish territories. Left with no other alternatives, these Kurdish families have to return to their place of origin, where they can face serious danger.

Some displaced are getting into the Kurdish provinces. Other relatively safe Governorates, such as Karbala and Basra, have been forced *de facto* to shut their borders because they say their infrastructure can not accommodate an influx of internal refugees.

Whereas many Iraqis tell us they worry most about security, in the stable Kurdish area the biggest concerns are economic. Those who reach the Kurdish provinces must surmount difficulties in finding housing, shelter, employment, and education for their children. They face an inflation rate of over 70 percent and fuel and electricity prices that have increased 270 percent in the course of 2006.

Most internal refugees can not find work, except for professionals such as doctors or engineers, who are welcomed and sometimes even sought after by Kurdish authorities. Some displaced stay with host families; others are staying in public buildings, depending entirely on the host community's willingness to help. "We depend on our neighbors' generosity to feed our children," a displaced Kurd said,

Only 1% of the displaced in Iraq are in camps. Although some local officials told RI they favored setting up camps, we agree with the UN and others that integration into local communities is preferable. Most of the new arrivals have to pay rent, which has risen drastically in the past couple of years, particularly in the main urban areas. High rents are exhausting the resources of displaced families. In the town of Shaklawa alone, in the Erbil governorate, we heard that 10 families had to return to their place of origin in February because the cost of living was too high. A Sunni Arab woman from Baghdad living in Erbil told Refugees International that she and her husband had decided to return to Baghdad with their two children despite the threats they had received for being Sunni. "My husband can't find work here, and the rent is too expensive. Everything is cheaper in Baghdad. God will protect us, I hope."

Before 2003, 80 % of Iraqis depended on a monthly Public Distribution System (PDS) for food and fuel under the U.N.'s Oil for Food program. With the economy in chaos and high unemployment, the program now run by the Iraqi government, is more needed than ever.

To qualify for PDS, Iraqis need ration cards that are distributed in their towns of residence. The cards have also served as the basis for the voter registration system for post-war Iraqi elections, so they have acquired political significance. Since voter roles depend on the issuance of ration cards, towns are reluctant to allow families to take their ration cards when they move. Without ration cards, these people cannot get food. In theory, after acquiring a residence permit from the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), displaced people can return to their place of origin to file a request to transfer the food ration cards, but many find it too expensive or too unsafe to return. If they do return to initiate a transfer of their ration card, the application must go to Baghdad, but neither the central government nor the Kurdish authorities have much interest in promoting migration, particularly of Arabs. No family RI interviewed said it had been able to transfer its food ration card. The displaced blame the lack of access to food and fuel rations on bureaucratic resistance, general inefficiency, and rampant corruption. RI believes it is essential that institutions such as the US Agriculture Department or the UN World Food Program immediately seek to assist the Iraqi government to overcome these problems and devise an, improved and more effective public distribution system to get these resources to the displaced.

Displaced people in the KRG can go to public hospitals, but their children frequently cannot enter school. To be admitted into a school, children must present an official certificate from their former school attesting to the grade they have completed. Many families left in a hurry and were not able to obtain these papers before they fled.

Another obstacle for displaced children is the lack of Arabic language schools in the Kurdish region. A large number of the displaced are Arabs or Kurds who have been living in Arab areas for decades and thus many can not speak Kurdish. Arabic schools in the KRG are only in the main urban areas. Many of the displaced have chosen to settle in smaller towns or villages where the cost of living is lower. As a result, their children are not able to go to school. Even in the main cities, access to Arabic language schools is a problem since there are very few. In Erbil, there are only two Arabic schools in the city, which operate on two shifts to allow as many children as possible to attend classes. In Suleimaniya, three schools with three

shifts each are unable to meet the needs of the growing Arab community. The government as well as UN agencies such as UNHCR and UNICEF need to address displaced children's education and health needs. To do so, they will need increased resources.

In Baghdad the national Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MoDM) is reluctant to admit the level of displacement. This lack of political will, combined with the deficiencies in Iraqi bureaucracy and the country's generalized insecurity, means a lack of government services to the displaced. In fact, the Iraqi Government's refusal to declare a humanitarian crisis is leading international donors to question whether their funds are really needed to assist the displaced. Many argue that since the Iraqi Government has billions of dollars of unspent funds, it should not be the international community's role to provide additional funding. Kurdish authorities have provided *ad hoc* assistance. Some mayors are able to provide the most vulnerable with some form of assistance. Others in need receive nothing.

International non-governmental organizations, local relief agencies and religious groups are providing some assistance to the displaced. The Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS) continues to function at a national level, albeit in a fragile way. In Erbil Governorate it has provided some assistance to 8,000 families. Depending largely on volunteers, the IRCS is doing the best it can with limited resources. RI believes that increased aid to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and its local partner ICRS from the U.S. and other donors could dramatically improve conditions for the displaced in Kurdish and other areas of Iraq.

So far, the U.N.'s response has been almost non-existent. After the U.S.-led invasion in 2003, the U.N. started operating on the assumption that the Iraqi challenge would be rehabilitation, reconstruction, and development. Only last month did U.N. agencies officially declare Iraq a humanitarian crisis, where the emphasis must shift to saving lives, not spurring development. Some critics told us U.N. agencies are reluctant to let go of the "development approach," as they fear loss of budgets and resistance from their donors.

Among Iraqis, the U.N. has a low reputation. Many blame it for the painful sanctions imposed on Saddam Hussein's Iraq because of the Gulf War. Since 2003, Iraqis don't think the U.N. has done much to ease current security and humanitarian problems. In addition it suffers from a lack of resources and in our view excessive security restrictions in the KRG region, which have severe consequences on the ability of staff to operate effectively.

The U.N. Refugee Agency, which has primary responsibility for displaced people in the Kurdish and southern regions of Iraq, only has about \$9 million to spend in 2007. "If we were looking at responding to real needs, then even \$150 million would not be enough," said one UNHCR official. The International Organization for Migration is charged with assisting internally displaced in the rest of Iraq, but the IOM is also short of funds. RI urges the U.S. and other donors to provide these two organizations and their implementing partners with more resources.

Since the bombing of the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad in 2003, the agency has operated largely out of Amman, Jordan. For security reasons U.N. officials in Baghdad stay mainly in the heavily fortified Green Zone, "and when they come out, they are escorted by the Multi-National Force," says one non-government relief worker in Iraq. Even in the Kurdish area, where conditions are secure and travel safe, U.N. workers stay largely in their compounds, which are difficult to access. When they leave, they travel in armored vehicles, making it difficult for them to interact, collect data and manage programs.

The U.S. and Iraq are finding it difficult to stop the violence in Iraq. Until they do, the flood of internally displaced and refugees will continue. While we don't yet know how to stabilize Iraq, we do know how to protect and support displaced Iraqis. We must continue and increase our efforts to do it now multilaterally and bilaterally.

Refugees International is an independent, non-profit humanitarian advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. Refugees International generates lifesaving humanitarian assistance and protection for displaced people around the world and works to end the conditions that create displacement. We do not accept government or United Nations funding, relying instead on contributions from individuals, foundations and corporations.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you very much. We will now hear from Sarah, who is not going to be on our screen. Sarah, we assure you your identity is not going to be made known, neither your place from which you are testifying. Sarah.

**STATEMENT OF SARAH (ALIAS), FORMER EMPLOYEE, U.S.
EMBASSY BAGHDAD**

Ms. SARAH. I would like to thank Chairman Ackerman and the other members of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East for inviting me to testify today. In 2003, I was waiting anxious for the Americans to come to my country. We wanted to be free, and I wanted to work with them because I believed they would help us gain our freedom.

In July 2003, I looked for a job as a military translator. Instead I was hired by a private contractor. I first started working with the U.S. Embassy in October 2004 at the human resources office as a human resources assistant. My job was helping newly arrived American employees with all the requirements of checking into the Embassy. I also drafted memos to the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and helped with the hiring process.

When I was working for the Americans, I had to walk into the Green Zone every day. I had to take taxis to change roads, times and days just to get to my work. I had to disguise myself so I will not be recognized. When I get inside the Green Zone, I was abused by the Iraqi workers. I had to hear their bad and dirty words to me, and they are grabbing and touching when I pass through the gates.

I was in danger. I was so scared that one day it would be my turn either to be kidnapped or killed by the insurgents. I and the other female employee asked the Embassy to protect us because we were afraid and we were in serious danger. We asked them to provide us for the places to stay inside the Green Zone but they refused.

I went through a lot just to get to my work on time because I believed and trusted the Americans and the reason behind this war but the Americans did not trust us. In June 2006, the regional Embassy office in Basra asked for assistance because most of their Iraqi staff quit their jobs due to the danger. Only one employee was left in Basra. So I volunteered. I worked there as a cashier and handled the payrolls. I also was a liaison between the regional Embassy office and the Iraqi officials, by calling them, setting up meetings and escorting them in and out of the United States compound.

Three times a day and sometimes during the night we were attacked with rockets and mortars. In the same month I applied for a tourist visa to visit my cousin who lives in Portland, Oregon, and after 3 months I got the approval. In October 2006, I arrived into the U.S. After that I received an email from my sister telling me that my family had received a threat letter from Al-tawheed wal Jihad group which is now in Iraq as a terrorist organization.

They have threatened to kill me because of my work with the Americans. My father who did not know before that I worked for the Americans knows now, and he threatened to kill me too because it is against the tribe tradition to work with the Americans, especially if you are a woman. I am very lucky that I did not get the threat while I was there because I would be dead now.

I did not ask the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad to help me get asylum or any kind of help because I knew they will not do anything to help me or protect me. They did not protect me or my colleagues

when we asked for their protection. Instead, they hired Jordanians to work for the Embassy saying they did not want to risk any more Iraqis.

On December 2006, I applied for an asylum and a work permit because now I cannot go back to my country, and I cannot go back to my home. I pay the fee for the work permit, and I attended all the interviews. The asylum officer told me that I should be hearing from them in 2 or 3 weeks after the interview. It has now been more than 2 months, and I am still waiting to hear from them. I have called them several times, and they did nothing except reconfirm my information.

Before the war I have worked the Iraqi Minister of Trade on oil for food program. I worked there as a simple employee who takes orders from her boss. I did not get any benefits from this program except my salary as an employee who did her job. The beneficiaries were the big bosses and Saddam. The simple employees did not have access to confidential information because as you all know Saddam did not trust anyone.

I lost close friends who were killed by the insurgents because they worked with the Americans. One of my colleagues was kidnapped and found hanged using the veil that she wore. We risked our lives working for the United States, and now we need you to protect us. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sarah follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF SARAH (ALIAS), FORMER EMPLOYEE, U.S. EMBASSY
BAGHDAD

I'd like to thank Chairman Ackerman and the other members of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East for inviting me to testify today.

In 2003, I was waiting, anxious for the Americans to come to my country. We wanted to be free, and I wanted to work with them because I believed they would help us gain our freedom. In July of 2003 I looked for a job as a military translator. Instead I was hired by private contractors. I first started working with the US Embassy in October of 2004, in the Human resources office as a Human resources assistant. My job was helping newly arrived American employees with all the requirements of checking into the Embassy. I also drafted memos to the Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and helped with the hiring process.

When I was working for the Americans, I had to walk into the green zone every day; I had to take taxis, to change routs, times and gates just to get to my work. I had to disguise myself, so I won't be recognized. And when I get inside the green zone, I was abused by the Iraqi workers; I had to hear their bad and dirty words to me, and their grabbing and touching when I pass through the gates. I was in danger, I was so scared that one day it would be my turn either to be kidnapped or killed by the insurgents. I and the other female employees asked the Embassy to protect us, because we were afraid and we were in serious danger. We asked them to provide us with places to stay inside the green zone, but they refused. I went through a lot just to get to my work on time, because I believed and trusted the Americans and the reason behind this war, but the Americans didn't trust us.

In June 2006, the Regional Embassy office in Basra asked for assistance, because most of their Iraqi staff quit their job due to the danger. Only one employee was left in Basra, so I volunteered. I worked there as a cashier and handled the pay rolls. I also was a liaison between the Regional Embassy office and the Iraqi officials, by calling them setting up meetings, and escorting them in and out the US compound. Three times a day, and sometimes during the night, we were attacked with rockets and mortars.

In the same month I applied for a tourist visa to visit my cousin who lives in Portland, Oregon and after three months I got the approval.

In October 2006 I arrived in to the US . After that I received an email from my sister telling me that my family had received a threat letter from Al-tawheed wal Jihad group, which is known in Iraq as a terrorist organization. They threatened to kill me because of my work with the Americans. My father who didn't know be-

fore that I worked with the Americans, knows now, and he threatened to kill me too, because it's against the tribe tradition to work with the Americans especially if you are a woman. I am very lucky that I didn't get the threat while I was there because I would be dead now."

I didn't ask the US Embassy in Baghdad to help me get asylum or any kind of help, because I knew they won't do anything to help me or protect me. They didn't protect me or my colleagues when we asked for their protection, instead they hired Jordanians to work for the Embassy, saying they didn't want to risk any more Iraqis.

On December 2006, I applied for an asylum and a work permit, because now I can't go back to my country and I can't go back to my home. I paid the fee for the work permit, and I attended all the interviews. The asylum officer told me that I should be hearing from them into three weeks after the interview. It has now been more than two months and I'm still waiting to hear from them. I have called them several times, and they did nothing except reconfirm my information.

Before the war I worked with the Iraqi Ministry of Trade on the Oil for Food program. I worked there as a simple employee who takes orders from her boss. I didn't get any benefits from this program except my salary as an employee who did her job. The beneficiaries were the big bosses and Saddam. The simple employees didn't have access to confidential information, because as you all know Saddam didn't trust anyone.

I lost close friends who were killed by the insurgents, because they work with the Americans. One of my colleagues was kidnapped and found hanged using the veil that she wore.

We risked our lives working for the United States and now we need you to protect us.

Thank you very much.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Thank you, Sarah. We will begin first with Mr. Pence.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank the panel present and through video link for compelling and important testimony. I am particularly interested in a question that has been brought up again and again, and that is as each of us considers the right legislative response to this from a policy perspective is I am very curious. Maybe I could begin with you, General Eaton and then I would like to go to Sarah and then the balance of the panel.

General Eaton, in your experience there as a trainer of Iraqi security forces, how many of those Iraqi translators in your judgment—and I want to ask this in both directions if I may, General, without be confusing—how many do you believe are currently or are in peril as a result of their cooperation with United States forces?

And also, what percentage given the real situation on the ground you were dealing with, how many of them might represent security risks to the United States that would factor into issues like resettlement in our country? I do not want to confuse you on the question but how many do you think are at risk physically or in some peril, and what percentage in your experience dealing with Iraqi translators might represent security risks to our country?

General EATON. Thank you, sir, for the question. The second question first. I found the group of Iraqis working with me and my team absolutely patriotic to the country of Iraq and absolutely loyal to the program to develop Iraqi security forces, and loyalty to the coalition. They felt themselves members of the coalition. Not all Americans perceived it so but certainly within my outfit a nine nation to include Iraq outfit my translators were teammates and we feared nothing and received much from them.

The first question. I am sufficiently removed in time and place to comment on the numbers still working on the team. I am in-

volved in a case of a translator who is still working with what my outfit evolved into, and that person is at risk. That person is through a U.S. non commissioned officer working on behalf of this translator to bring that translator into safety.

Mr. PENCE. Thank you, General, and thank you for your service to the country in Iraq and throughout your career. Sir, I would number one, thank you for your service to the United States and Iraq. Thank you for believing in us, and I hope today's hearing in some way encourages your faith in the American people.

Sarah, let me ask you. How many of your fellow Iraqis do you think experienced the level of threat that you have experienced or are in jeopardy as a result of having worked in various roles with the United States?

Ms. SARAH. Actually I will say every person who worked or is still working with the Americans is in danger. It does not matter if he works for the State Department or with the army or with other companies because the insurgents they attack every person who works for the Americans because they consider them as spies.

Mr. PENCE. And so if we were assessing, Sarah, the dimensions of this issue, we would want to look at everyone who had at any point been on the payroll in Basra, Baghdad or Ramadi or Bulan or elsewhere in the country?

Ms. SARAH. Yes.

Mr. PENCE. Okay. Mr. Packer, with regard to you, your reporting indicates that mortal peril is about 100 percent in your assessment. Am I rightly interpreting your sense of things?

Mr. PACKER. Yes. One Iraqi said to me, once you have that stamp on your face you can never get rid of it. In other words, even if you have not yet been identified you will spend the rest of your life trying to keep everyone you know from knowing what you were doing during those 3 or 4 years because if it ever comes out, you are a dead man or woman. You will never have clemency. There is no statute of limitations on having been as the insurgents see it a collaborator.

Mr. PENCE. I thank you for the testimony again of this panel. I would observe it does strike me that given the universal nature of the peril in which we have put Iraqis who cooperated with us, that is an argument for finding a way to succeed in Iraq. It is an argument for not leaving the thousands of people who have cooperated directly and indirectly in the hands of people who would do the kinds of things, Sarah, that you have had to witness among friends. So with that, I will yield back. I appreciate the chairman for the courtesy of going first, and thank this panel for their informative testimony.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank the gentleman. General, if I could start with you. How important would you say trust and respect is and was to the purpose of your mission and what you were trying to get in dealing with Iraqis who were helping us?

General EATON. Mr. Chairman, the phrase hearts and minds weigh heavily upon us all right now, and the General we have in command in Iraq right now understands it probably better than anybody I know. The Iraqi society to a far greater degree than our own and we view dignity and respect as critical components of our society, dignity and respect in Iraqi society are capital, and to dem-

onstrate our respect to the Iraqi population, to the Iraqi citizen, and to provide the citizens of Iraq all the dignity that we can is critical to our mission, and we have improvements to make across the board in how we handle the refugee situation right now to transmit our willingness to consider Iraqi a true member of our coalition.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I find it interesting that I had scribbled down as I was thinking of questions under trust and respect I wrote down hearts and minds. How could we ever expect to win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people even when we dealt with those specific people that were so courageous as to step up to the plate and risk everything in helping us by turning around and showing them that we did not respect them and did not trust them? I would think it would be very, very hard to trust somebody who does not trust you. It is really hard to respect somebody who does not respect you.

How are we ever going to win in this entire mission if that was our attitude that we either projected or that the Iraqis perceived us to have? Was this doomed from the start because of an attitude problem?

General EATON. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. ACKERMAN. General.

General EATON. Every day American soldiers are soldiering side-by-side with well-armed Iraqi citizens or members of the Iraqi security forces, and there is great trust going on in both directions, and to soldier next to a member of the coalition as well-armed as you are is the truest definition of trust and respect that you can accord your fellow man. I would expect our Government to behave as properly as we are asking our privates and our sergeants and our lieutenants to behave in the mean streets of Iraq today.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Packer, do you have any thoughts on that?

Mr. PACKER. Well I spent the last few months trying to answer your question because the deeper I looked into the story of these Iraqis the more astounded I was at the cavalier way in which they have been treated, not by every individual American they have come across. Every one of them cites a number of Americans who helped them, who gave them trust, who gave them love even but institutionally the verdict was unanimous that we failed them, and it is hard to understand how that could have happened given as you just put it quite well that if we could not convince the Iraqis who came to meet us halfway from the very beginning and risked their lives every day from that point on that we would support them, how we could possibly win the support of the rest of the population.

As one Iraqi who was fired from the Embassy after 3 years of service for as far as I could tell almost no cause at all said to an American friend of his, how are you going to win this war if you cannot win the hearts of your own allies in this war? I think it is a fundamental failure to understand what this war is about which is the Iraqis. Instead this issue has been treated like every other aspect of this war, fundamentally as a problem of political perception, of message control, of bureaucracy, of making the problem go away by not confronting it, denial, name it the way you want, and now after 4 years it is finally beginning to burst out into the open, and it is very, very late in the day.

It is a crisis now. Again like so much else about this war, better late than never but too many Iraqis have been killed already, and too many are in desperate circumstances now. I feel a great sense of urgency about this, and I was disappointed by some of the testimony earlier which suggests that we are going to be waiting months and month and months more while problems are considered from every angle before they are solved.

We could cut through this very quickly if there was leadership from the top. If there was a willingness to take the political hit of acknowledging this problem and then doing the right thing, as you said President Ford did at the end of the Vietnam War. It was more difficult now than then because we are still in it in Iraq. Vietnam was lost in April 1975. Now at this point we are still trying to win in Iraq, and so it is harder to say we have to rescue these Iraqis but it is no less morally incumbent on us to do so.

Mr. ACKERMAN. That was my question before to the previous panel. If we begin the process of rescuing these people whose lives we have placed or helped place in jeopardy, does that indicate that we have thrown in the towel and we have quit on the notion that this war is going ever so well, and we are going to win it? Is that the first signal from us that it is over?

Mr. PACKER. That may be how parts of public opinion and Washington opinion regards it. I do not think it has to mean one or the other. I think all along we have failed to protect Iraqis working with us. Long before the perception was that the war was lost, as Sarah pointed out earlier. This is just an extension of that failure. We could begin to do the right thing by these Iraqis without announcing that our effort in Iraq was over. That is a false choice, and it is a way of postponing or avoiding action on this issue. It may well be the main reason why the administration has been so slow but to my mind it is not an adequate reason.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Sarah, are you with us?

Ms. SARAH. Yes, sir. I think it is easy that you can trust the Iraqis, especially the one who works with the Americans for a long time because especially for the Iraqis who wants to work for the State Department we have to go through security questionnaires and you have to do polygraphs. If we fail, they will not hire us. But the problem is with the Americans especially with the State Department. They do not trust us. They do not trust the employees. No matter what we do, they do not trust us.

They think we are still because we go out to the red zone, they think we might have any like contact with insurgents and maybe we will be spy and even they told the Jordanians to be alert and be careful from the Iraqis who have been working inside the Embassy.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Sarah, why did you take the risk to do the job that you did? What made you do that?

Ms. SARAH. Because I wanted to help the Americans, and I believed in what they like in this war like they said this war is going to be to liberate the Iraqis and help them, and I wanted to help them also, and I wanted to help my country because without the Iraqis, I do not think the Americans could do their job. I mean they still could do their job but without the translators or the employees, the Iraqis, I do not think they can.

Mr. ACKERMAN. How did you feel when they started hiring Jordanians and getting rid of Iraqis and trusted Jordanians instead?

Ms. SARAH. We were very upset, and I felt this is unfair and we talked to them, and their excuse was that some of the Iraqis been like kidnapped or threatened so they do not want to hire more Iraqis because they do not want to risk their lives. We asked them to help us giving us trailers inside the Green Zone but they said no, we cannot afford that. So how do they could afford that for the Jordanians, and they could not afford it for us?

Mr. ACKERMAN. So the Jordanians were allowed to live inside the Green Zone?

Ms. SARAH. Yes. And also the Jordanians had been living inside the Green Zone. They are not allowed to go outside the Green Zone, and the State Department they were paying them 50 percent of danger pay while they were inside safe while we, the Iraqis, who have been going in and out into the red zone, they paid us 50 percent.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You got 50 percent?

Ms. SARAH. 15. Sorry, 15 percent.

Mr. ACKERMAN. 15.

Ms. SARAH. Yes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Sarah, if you had it to do all over again, to volunteer to work with the Americans, to put your life at risk, what would you think and what would your choice be? Would it be any different?

Ms. SARAH. I do not think they will change. I mean I would still love to work with the Americans, and especially the Army, but I do not think with the State Department you know because they do not trust Iraqis. I mean the Army you heard like they tried to help their interpreters but not the State Department.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Ms. Younes, any thoughts?

Ms. YOUNES. Well I am just thinking about your earlier question about denial and what it means to admit that people are leaving Iraq. I think it might be true of people working for the United States but it is also true of the 2 million refugees who have left and the 1.9 million internally displaced inside Iraq who are also victims of the violence that was sparked by the United States invasion. Denial was also the number one characteristic of the U.S. response to the humanitarian crisis.

We have only started recently to address it, and only recently has the United States started in its rhetoric to acknowledge the fact that civilians in Iraq were suffering greatly from the violence. Although I completely agree with the fact that the U.S. has a moral obligation to the people who have risked their lives to work with the country, I believe the U.S. has also a moral obligation to address the humanitarian consequences for all those who suffered as a direct result of the violence that has been occurring since 2003.

This country must show leadership in addressing the needs of the 2 million refugees, of the 1.9 million internally displaced for other countries to start addressing them as well. The international community is looking to the U.S. to take that leadership role, and that is something the U.S. has not done until now.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Let me ask you if you could give us a little bit more detail on the problems surrounding the term material support in the Patriot Act and how you would suggest the criteria be designed or redesigned or amended.

Ms. YOUNES. Well though I am by no means an expert in U.S. resettlement, my understanding—

Mr. ACKERMAN. Obviously neither are we.

Ms. YOUNES. My understanding is that a lot of Iraqis would be unable to be resettled in the United States because they paid ransom or they had to bribe their way out of the country to stay alive. We understand that there has been a duress recently but that this only applied to the Tier 3 groups of terrorist groups but not the first two tiers which we would suggest that there should be a general waiver applied to Iraqis but also refugees who have had to under duress provide material support in the form of ransoms or bribes to save their lives because they had no other choice to do so.

Mr. ACKERMAN. You know when this whole thing started most of us—I am talking about the war—were very puzzled by the reaction in so many places throughout the world that really questioned our motivation. That said we were not going in for those reasons. We were going in for all these other reasons that we knew we were not going in for, and we were not going in for oil. We were going in because of genuine concern for security, and then later genuine concern with the condition of the Iraqi people and the indignities that they suffered, and to do a regime change, and to bring them democracy, and give them a constitution or give them a different constitution. Give them yet another constitution.

Despite all our puzzlement and protestations that the United States is the good guys, how could you mistake us for anything else, that we never go into another country to abuse their people or take their land or disrespect them or seize their resources or for any personal gain, that when we do those things it is for good reasons, and I think that most of us Americans really believed that about ourselves, and believed that is who we are, and therefore were so amazed by the notion that so many other people would be so misguided into thinking that we were something less.

And now it seems the way that we are treating the very people that came to help us to succeed in what we said we were all about are now being treated as the rest of the world said we were capable of doing. This is a big question but what do we do to restore our national image? To reclaim our position as a moral authority in the world? I would think one of them would be addressing this refugee problem to show our bona fides as humanitarians.

Mr. PACKER. I was just going to say that one man I met in the Middle East told me that once he left Iraq he looked for work in other Arab countries, and when they learned that he had worked with the United States it was not a point in his favor. It was not a good thing on his resume. In fact, they said to him, are you not sorry you trusted the Americans? We told you that this is what they would do to you, and that was the bitterest thing for him to hear because not that he necessarily agreed entirely but in a sense we had made their own line easier.

We had made their propaganda against the United States easier both inside Iraq and outside, and another Iraqi said to me that he went to work for the United States partly because he felt a debt for his freedom, and he was certain that the U.S. would carry out its end of the obligation by helping him leave if it came to that, and I said, "What if they do not? What if they abandon you?" And he said, "Then my debt to the U.S. will be paid. I will be free."

I think what we can begin to do is exactly what you have begun in this hearing which is to take up this moral obligation, whatever the cost to us in dollars or in political price so that history will not look back and say that we failed this basic test of honor toward Iraqis.

Ms. YOUNES. And if I may add I think it is essential of course to address the issue of Iraqis who have supported the United States, but the United States does have an obligation toward Iraqi civilians in general, and I think the first thing we need to do as an international community but the first thing the United States needs to do as a leader is to acknowledge the consequences that the violence has had on civilians in Iraq, and to stop denying the fact that Iraq has now become a humanitarian emergency, and that people inside and outside of the country are in dire, dire need of assistance.

The region as a whole needs our help, and we need to start sharing the burden to host the Iraqis, to assist them, and to provide them with protection in and outside of the country.

Mr. ACKERMAN. General, any thoughts?

General EATON. Mr. Chairman, I would just echo the comments of my colleagues. You have hit upon perhaps the first opportunity to rehabilitation of U.S. image in the world, and by picking this particular problem, a solvable problem, a problem that you can define and articulate a way ahead to fix, in the face of administration challenge, I think that you have hit the first opportunity to rehabilitate public image here. Thank you.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well thank you. I think this is going to be a battle against ourselves to get this done somehow. I do not know that I was more puzzled than amused to find the administration shocked; shocked that somebody would be forging documents and passports or visas in Iraq. I do not think there is a person that I know that would not think without any disbelief whatsoever that that is going on. Sarah, is there anything that we can do that would redeem the United States in your eyes?

Ms. SARAH. Excuse me, sir. Can you repeat the question?

Mr. ACKERMAN. Yes. What would you think the U.S. could do if anything that would make you feel proud that you helped in this effort?

Ms. SARAH. I think the United States need to help the Iraqis who ask for their help because we trusted the Americans, and we have been working with them, risking our lives and when it comes there are a lot of my colleagues are being threatened, they asked the Embassy for help, they offer to them to stay inside the Green Zone for 2 weeks. I don't think the insurgents will change their minds in 2 weeks.

As soon as you work with the Americans, you are a sinner even when you go outside Iraq. I have been in Jordan and the Jor-

danians, when I tell them I have worked for the Embassy, they told me, "You sold Saddam to work for the Americans." So I think the Americans need to help us. Like in my situation now, now I am in trouble. I cannot go back to my country. I cannot go back to my home, and when I ask for help, they did not help me. So I think that when any Iraqi asks for help, I think they should help them.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Well, I guess they have run the clock on us as they say. We have the House going back into session. They will be ringing the bells momentarily for votes. Let me thank each of you, those visually here, those by voice only, and the two of you are here in person for contributing so much to the understanding that we have to gain and absorb so that we might properly begin to redevelop the self respect that we have personally lost because of this, and to help reestablish the position of the United States so that it is recognized by others as well as our own selves as the great country that we know it has been and can be. Thank you very much. The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 6:32 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD

WRITTEN RESPONSES FROM THE HONORABLE ELLEN SAUERBREY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, BUREAU OF POPULATION, REFUGEES, AND MIGRATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE, TO QUESTIONS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD BY THE HONORABLE GARY L. ACKERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK, AND CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH ASIA

Question:

The Subcommittee heard testimony that suggests that the United States should immediately identify those Iraqis who worked closely with us, who are at risk and who have requested the right to emigrate to the United States. Are you currently taking those steps? If so, how would you define the class of Iraqi's eligible?

Response:

The Department has taken a number of steps to identify Iraqis who fear or have experienced serious harm because of their association with the United States and to ensure that they will have access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP). We continue to focus on how best to complete this task. We are working closely with UNHCR, especially in the five neighboring countries that host significant populations of Iraqi refugees, and we are already receiving referrals for Iraqis in Jordan, Syria, Turkey, Lebanon, and Egypt. We continue to support the UNHCR referrals effort as the primary route of access to the USRAP for vulnerable Iraqi cases. However, we are also using Embassy and direct referrals for those cases deemed most vulnerable due to their close association with the U.S. Government.

We are planning to begin directly referring (without a UNHCR review) to the USRAP Iraqi asylum seekers in Jordan and Syria who have suffered or fear persecution because of work for the U.S.G. either as full-time contract interpreters or as U.S. Mission staff. We have established an email connection to permit Iraqis to contact us directly with refugee-related questions and concerns.

In addition to the USRAP, there is a Special Immigrant Visa program for interpreters who have worked for the U.S. Armed Forces. In 2006, Congress passed legislation to offer special immigrant status to persons serving as translators with the U.S. Armed Forces in Afghanistan and Iraq. Under this statute, a limited number of translators (50 total per calendar year) and their immediate family may immigrate to the United States each fiscal year. We support expanding this program to include State Department translators and Foreign Service Nationals, as well as the surviving spouses and minor children of Iraqis who were killed before the special legislation took effect. In addition, the Administration has proposed a Special Immigrant Visa waiver. The legislation would give the Secretary of State worldwide authority, under extraordinary circumstances, to lower the number of years a foreign service national (FSN) must work in order to be eligible for the existing special immigrant visa program from fifteen to three years. We also welcome the intent of Kennedy/Lugar (Senate bill 1104) and Fortenberry/Berman bill (HR 1790), which seek to extend existing law on special immigrant visa to allow as many as 1500 interpreters, under our Department of Defense and State authority, serving in Iraq and Afghanistan, access to the special immigrant visa program. Both bills are aiming to address the needs of employees serving in difficult posts or on the front lines with our soldiers or our diplomats and others, who are at risk or who could become at risk because of their affiliation with the United States Government.

Question:

The Subcommittee also heard that one step the United States should take is to review Iraqi requests for asylum in Iraq so that the individuals involved wouldn't have

to travel to another country in order to be interviewed. Are we conducting such reviews in Iraq? If not, why not?

Response:

The U.S. Embassy in Baghdad has established a committee to review cases of Iraqis closely associated with the U.S. Mission or efforts in Iraq who have experienced or fear serious harm. If the committee determines that a credible fear of persecution exists, it refers the case to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) for resettlement consideration. Since the security environment in Iraq and the lengthy security clearance process currently precludes USRAP in-country processing, individuals referred by the Embassy must go to one of our processing centers in the region.

Question:

The Subcommittee also heard suggestions that if we cannot conduct asylum reviews in Iraq that we make arrangements to provide some sort of safe transit so that Iraqis applying for asylum can travel to other countries to be processed. Is the Administration considering that option?

Response:

We have a plan in the final review process to move a limited number of Iraqis at risk because of their work with the USG to third countries for refugee processing. I would be happy to go into more detail on this plan in a secure briefing.

Question:

The subcommittee received testimony that one of the ways the United States could provide immediate assistance to these Iraqis is to expand the number of special visas for U.S. interpreters and their families. Is your bureau pursuing that option? What about the option of allowing these Iraqis to bypass UNHCR and register directly with the United States for resettlement consideration? What about the creation of a special immigrant visa or a form of humanitarian parole?

Response:

The Administration forwarded a legislative proposal to Congress in April 2007 that would liberalize the special immigrant visa (SIV) program for local national employees of the U.S. Government abroad. If passed, the legislation would give the Secretary of State authority, in extraordinary conditions, to lower the number of years a USG national employee abroad must work in order to be eligible for a special immigrant visa from fifteen to three years. The employee, and any accompanying spouse and children, must also fulfill all other visa requirements in existing law. We hope that Congress adopts this important piece of legislation into law.

We also welcome the intent of the Kennedy/Lugar bill (S 1104) and the Fortenberry/Berman bill (HR 1790), which seek to extend existing law on special immigrant visas to allow as many as 1000 interpreters and translators working with the U.S. Armed Forces and under Chief of Mission authority in Iraq and Afghanistan access to the special immigrant visa program in FY 2007 and 2008. Both bills are aiming to address the needs of local national interpreters and translators serving in difficult posts or on the front lines with our soldiers or our diplomats and others, who are at risk or who could become at risk because of their affiliation with the United States Government. We look forward to working with the Congress on these important initiatives.

Question:

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey, in response to a Senate question for the record, you answered that "there are tens of thousands of Iraqis who are now or have in the recent past worked with USG agencies and/or contractors in furtherance of our mission in Iraq. Despite these numbers, our Embassy reports that relatively few have sought assistance in leaving the country."

- Isn't it possible that so few apply for refugee status in the United States mainly because most Iraqis, even those who have worked for the United States Government, simply assume that getting American Status is all but impossible? Isn't this especially likely since Iraqis cannot apply directly for refugee status at the American Embassy in Baghdad?*

Response:

We believe that Iraqis are well aware of the security problems that make direct large-scale application for refugee status at Embassy Baghdad dangerous and impractical. Iraqis who have worked with us also understand that the United States remains committed to our long tradition of refugee resettlement and that our pro-

gram is open to them. Our support for the rapid expansion of UNHCR capacity and establishing our own U.S. Embassy referral program demonstrates that Iraqis can count on the United States. Over 3,000 Iraqis have been referred to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program since February and are currently undergoing processing.

Question:

Congress established a Special Immigrant Visa program for translators for up to 50 Defense Department translators in Iraq and Afghanistan. How long has the Bush administration been aware of the program's backlog of applicants? Why hasn't the Administration requested Congress to consider bumping up the number of visas for the men and women who have been literally serving in the trenches with our own armed forces?

Response:

The best source of information on this topic would be the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security. The State Department is the last step in the processing of these cases. Before the State Department can adjudicate a Department of Defense (DoD) translator special immigrant visa (SIV) case, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) must approve SIV status based on a DoD referral and there must be a visa number available. DHS should be able to comment on the number of petitions approved for SIV status that cannot move forward because of the cap. As of May 24, 2007, the National Visa Center, a State Department office that has in its possession many of the petitions approved by DHS, has received 443 approved SIV petitions.

Question:

In February, the State Department announced that it was looking into exigent strategies to ameliorate the Iraq refugee crisis, including searching for ways to accelerate processing and review of applications,

- Is the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) prepared to create a subcategory within Priority 2 (P-2) or a new processing priority that would identify Iraqi groups of special humanitarian concern, such as people who are persecuted because of their actual or imputed association with the United States, in order to expedite refugee processing and to avoid the bottleneck of an under-resourced UNHCR in a gatekeeper role for all non-family based refugee referrals?*
- Is PRM prepared to expand family-reunification-based Iraqi refugee admissions beyond the narrow family relations of the current P-3 and to allow a wider range of anchor relatives beyond resettled refugees and asylees to petition for family reunification by allowing citizens and legal permanent residents also to petition on behalf of relatives? Are you prepared to allow adult children, grandparents and grandchildren and siblings to reunite?*

Response:

UNHCR has developed a list of eleven criteria to screen Iraqi asylum seekers and identify the most vulnerable for resettlement referrals. Among these criteria are membership in a targeted religious minority group and USG affiliation. We believe UNHCR screening offers the most appropriate avenue of referral for vulnerable Iraqi cases. UNHCR, with U.S. support, has already significantly expanded its capacity to process and refer vulnerable Iraqi cases in the countries neighboring Iraq. We have already received UNHCR referrals involving some 3,000 individuals with more coming into our system every day. UNHCR has committed to referring a total of 7,000 individuals to the U.S. program by the end of the summer, and we fully anticipate that referrals will continue to flow into the program even after this initial target is met.

In addition, the Administration is currently considering options which would allow expanded access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program for Iraqi refugees with close relatives in the U.S. beyond the scope of the Priority 3 and Visas 93 avenues.

Question:

Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey, in response to a Senate question for the record, you answered that the Consular Section at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad does not currently offer visa services to the general public due to restrictions on access to the Green Zone, but that the Embassy in Amman handled 3,700 non-immigrant visas and 846 immigrant visas for Iraqis just last year. However, in response to a separate question for the record, you responded that the "tens of thousands of Iraqis who are now, or have in the recent past worked with USG agencies and/or contractors in fur-

therance of our mission in Iraq . . . our Embassy reports that relatively few have sought assistance leaving the country.” So can we assume that the 4,500 Iraqis who went to the embassy in Amman last year for a visa are not the people who have been working in our cause? You didn’t mention the embassy in Damascus, but since Syria is the largest or second largest recipient of Iraqi refugees, can you tell me how many visa applications files at these two Embassies, were turned down last year?

Response:

Our embassies in Damascus and Amman continue to report that very few of the applicants they see were connected to U.S. operations in Iraq. That said, our posts do not keep statistics on the number of applications from Iraqis who were connected to U.S. efforts in Iraq.

In fiscal year 2006, Amman issued a total of 1,165 non-immigrant visas to Iraqis and refused 2,504. Of those 2,504 refusals, 986 were eventually issued. In fiscal year 2006, Damascus issued a total of 59 non-immigrant visas to Iraqis and refused 347. Of those 347 refusals, 39 were eventually issued.

Question:

Iraqi refugees have fled to virtually every country near Iraq, and most frequently to the countries that border Iraq, like Jordan and Syria. Though one is a strong U.S. ally and a recipient of several hundred million American aid dollars every year, and the other, is a nation subject to U.S. economic sanctions, both countries are relatively poor and the circumstances for refugees are quite stringent.

- *It’s been reported that Jordan has closed its borders to, and even deports, Iraqi men between the ages of 17 and 35, even if they have a proper UNHCR registration. If so, this policy may be putting some of the most vulnerable Iraqis in grave danger. What has the United States done about these allegations and what is the nature of US dialogue with the Jordanian government about the need to keep its border open to Iraqi asylum seekers, while ensuring that security threats are being kept out?*
- *There are reports that the Jordanian authorities are refusing to recognize UNHCR’s recognition of Iraqi refugees in Jordan and is not honoring refugee documents being issued by UNHCR. What is the United States to doing [sic] to indicate our support for UNHCR and for the exercise of its protection mandate in Jordan?*
- *Jordan reportedly requires Iraqi refugees to obtain a residency permit by depositing 50,000 Jordanian dinars—about \$70,000—in a Jordanian bank without drawing on it for a year. Is this true? Has the United States raised this issue with the Jordanian government? How many Iraqis can actually satisfy this requirement?*
- *Have these two countries allowed the international community to conduct a thorough assessment of refugee needs in their countries? Is the United States doing anything to make this happen? Are these two countries even acknowledging that Iraqi refugees are not “tourists” or “illegal immigrants”?*

Response:

Jordan officially maintains a visa-free travel regime for Iraqis. However, due to Jordanian national security concerns—Iraqis perpetrated the November 2005 Amman hotel bombings, there have been lethal attacks by Iraqis against U.S. and Iraqi security forces at the Iraq-Jordan border, and there is a continuing stream of legitimate threats against Iraqi, Jordanian and U.S. security forces at the border—and the large Iraqi refugee population already in country, the number of Iraqis permitted to cross the border has declined. Few Iraqis are admitted unless they are already known to the GOJ, or have been able to arrange admission in advance through contact with the GOJ. We understand that while many Iraqis are in formal violation of the terms under which they were admitted to Jordan, deportations are rare—on the order of a dozen per month, and, according to the GOJ, take place only in cases of criminal or security concerns.

The U.S. has an ongoing dialogue with the GOJ regarding the issues of admission of Iraqis into Jordan and treatment of Iraqis once they are in Jordan. PRM Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey discussed these issues with high-level Jordanian officials during her visit to Jordan in mid-March. Under Secretary for Democracy and Global Affairs Dobriansky called on Jordan to maintain open borders for Iraqis in her address to the UNHCR Conference on Iraqi Displacement on April 17 in Geneva. Both Secretaries Dobriansky and Sauerbrey reiterated these points to the Jordanian delegation at the conference in a bilateral meeting. Our Ambassador to Jordan, David Hale, also continues to encourage the GOJ to maintain an open border with Iraq.

Jordan has pointed out that it already hosts a very large population of Iraqis, especially when compared to its own small population (5.99 million) and limited resources. Jordan also hosts 1.7 million registered Palestinian refugees. In his address at the UNHCR conference at Geneva, the GOJ representative, Secretary General of the Ministry of Interior, H.E. Mukhaimer Abu Jamous, estimated the cost to Jordan of hosting an estimated 750,000 Iraqis at \$1 billion per year.

Relations between Jordan and UNHCR have been governed by a Memorandum of Understanding, signed in 1998, under which UNHCR had the authority to decide if individual Iraqis qualified as refugees. The MOU required UNHCR to resettle abroad, within six months, any Iraqi in Jordan which it determined to be a refugee. We understand that it has not been possible for UNHCR to fulfill that requirement. Given the current situation, UNHCR has asked the GOJ to renegotiate the MOU. This negotiation is currently under way. In the meantime, UNHCR continues to register individual refugees and provide services to needy Iraqis. The United States, in its recent discussions with the Jordanian Government in Geneva and Amman, has urged Jordan to conclude a new MOU that will allow UNHCR to deal effectively with the growing number of needy Iraqi refugees now in Jordan.

It is our understanding that one of the ways Iraqis and other nationalities can become legal residents of Jordan is to deposit funds in a Jordanian bank. Many Iraqis in Jordan cannot satisfy this requirement, though some have been able to renew temporary residency documents and have legal status in Jordan. Many others remain in Jordan on expired documentation. We do not have exact figures for either population. Jordan has not attempted to detain or expel Iraqis who have overstayed their residency permits. Our understanding is that Jordan does not intend to do so in the future.

The Norwegian NGO FAFO has started a survey of Iraqis in Jordan in cooperation with the Jordanian Government. This assessment, conceived in cooperation with UNHCR, is meant to better determine the demographics and needs of the Iraqi population in Jordan. Assistant Secretary Sauerbrey raised the importance of this survey with both Syria and Jordan on her visit to the country and during the UNHCR Conference in Geneva. Unfortunately the Syrian Government has declined FAFO's offer to conduct a similar survey in Syria, opting instead to rely on a survey performed by UNHCR in 2006 and one conducted by the Syrian Red Crescent. While neither Jordan nor Syria has officially declared that some or all of the Iraqis in their countries are "refugees," both have cooperated with the international community in practical ways in assisting the neediest Iraqis.

Question:

The State Department has reported that since 2003, the United States has contributed over \$185 million for Iraqi refugees, more than \$190 million for internally displaced persons, and \$424 million for food assistance. And in its request for supplemental appropriations, the Administration asked for an additional \$60 million for Iraqi refugees

- *So in five years, we've spent the better part of a billion dollars and at the same time, we hear that UNHCR can't process refugee referrals because it doesn't have enough money. What is the United States buying with all this money? The Iraqi refugee crisis appears to worsening and appears to many to be on the verge of a full blown humanitarian crisis. Does the United States need to adopt a wholly different model for dealing with this problem, or is the current system working?*

Response:

Most USG humanitarian assistance provided since 2003 has been spent inside Iraq to rebuild deficient or destroyed infrastructure, rehabilitate schools, clinics, water deliver points, and mobilize communities to provide services to returning Iraqis. Between 2003 and 2005 UNHCR reports that over 300,000 Iraqis returned to their homes. Our assistance facilitated their repatriation and integration back into their communities.

Since February 2006, however, sectarian violence has reversed the trend of Iraqis returning to their homes. UNHCR estimates that more than 700,000 Iraqis have become displaced within Iraq since 2006, and many tens of thousands more have fled to neighboring countries, especially Syria and Jordan. Our humanitarian assistance helps both returned refugees and newly displaced Iraqis. We are directing significant new assistance toward helping Iraqis in neighboring countries.

We have provided all funding that has been requested by UNHCR. We pledged \$18 million to its \$60 million 2007 Iraq appeal, which has now been fully subscribed. With the quick international response to its appeal, UNHCR has been able to rapidly ramp up its services, especially for needy and vulnerable Iraqis in Jordan

and Syria. UNHCR has also used the newly available resources to expand its capacity to register Iraqis refugees and refer deserving and vulnerable cases to resettlement countries, including the United States. To date, UNHCR has registered approximately 112,000 Iraqis in the region and referred 3,334 to the US Refugee Program.

While the current system has been strained by the reversal in 2006 from refugee returns to new outflows, and while security constraints limit our ability to implement and monitor projects inside Iraq, the system is responding to the needs of displaced Iraqis, including refugees in neighboring countries. Jordan and Syria made clear the extent of their needs at the April 17–18 UNHCR-sponsored conference on Iraqi Displacement in Geneva, and the international community in turn promised more assistance. This assistance will come not only through increased spending by UNHCR, but through greater donor support of NGOs delivering health, educational, and other essential services as well as bilateral mechanisms. We are now in the final stages of approving \$10 million in grants to NGOs for programs to help meet the health and educational needs of Iraqis in Lebanon, Syria and Jordan.

Question:

Officials at the United Nations refugee branch acknowledge that they have moved slowly in identifying refugees, largely because of procedural obstacles and lack of money. The agency's budget for Syria last year was \$700,000, less than one dollar for each Iraqi refugee in that country. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees said in October that its Iraq program was \$9 million short and that some employees were going without salaries.

- *The State Department spent \$35 million on Iraqi refugees in Iraq and the region in 2006 and provided \$18 million for UNHCR's emergency appeal for Iraq in January of this year. However, by comparison, the United States is spending approximately \$8 billion a month on the war. What additional assistance will the administration provide to UNHCR to help meet their needs?*

Response:

UNHCR had appealed for \$29.7 million in 2006 to meet the protection, assistance and resettlement needs of displaced Iraqis and third country refugees in Iraq. The U.S. Government contributed \$7.9 million towards that appeal and, by the end of the year, the UNHCR 2006 budget was fully funded.

In January 2007, UNHCR issued an emergency appeal of \$60 million to address expanding Iraqi refugee needs. This appeal has been almost entirely met by the donor community. Following the April 17–18 UNHCR Conference on Iraq displacement, we anticipate UNHCR will appeal for an additional \$40–\$60 million to expand its protection, assistance and resettlement operations in Iraq and neighboring countries. We expect to contribute an additional 30% to any new appeal, and we believe that other donors will also continue to be generous.

UNHCR's work is critical to helping provide urgent protection and humanitarian needs for displaced Iraqis in the region. UNHCR coordinates the work of the UN cluster that is responsible for addressing the needs of Iraqi refugees and internally displaced persons and seeking durable solutions for displaced Iraqis. It also chairs the UN Working Group on IDPs, monitors and produces regular reports on displacement rates, manages return and reintegration programs for Iraqi IDPs, assists Iraqi authorities in developing national policy on displacement and durable solutions and is currently providing health, education and emergency services to 50,000 IDPs and 44,000 non-Iraqi refugees within in Iraq. The U.S. Government will continue to support UNHCR diplomatically by urging host governments to permit UNHCR access to Iraqi refugees for protection and registration.

In addition to our financial contributions to UNHCR, we are addressing Iraqi displacement through other humanitarian agencies. We have provided funds to IOM for example, to build the organizational and technical capacity of the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration; we have made a substantial contribution to ICRC, which is the only major international humanitarian agency widely operating in Iraq on behalf of the displaced; and we have demarched host countries to permit NGOs to operate freely and have significantly increased our funding to NGOs in order to expand assistance programs.

[NOTE: The article from *The New Yorker* entitled "Betrayed," by George Packer, submitted for the hearing record, is not reprinted here but is available in subcommittee records.]

[NOTE: The booklet from Refugees International entitled "The World's Fastest Growing Displacement Crisis," submitted for the hearing record, is not reprinted here but is available in subcommittee records.]

